

jubilat

nine



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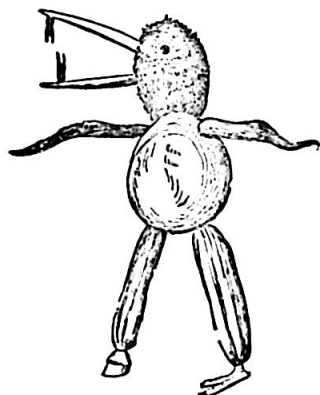
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ALEX FORMAN

ANATOMY OF FASTILENT AS REGARDS THE OUTWARD PARTS.

François Rabelais

Toes he had like a virginal on an organ.
Nails, like a gimlet.
Feet, like a guitar.
Heels, like a mace.
Soles of the feet, like a crucible.
Legs, like a lure.
Knees, like a stool.
Thighs, like a crossbow's gaffle.
Haunches, like a wimble.
Belly big as a ton, buttoned up in the old style and loosely girt.
Navel, like a fiddle.
Groin, like a mincemeat pasty.
Member, like a slipper.
Balls, like a little leather vial.
Genitals, like a carpenter's plane.
Cremasters, like a racket.
Perineum, like a flageolet.
Asshole, like a crystal mirror.
Buttocks, like a harrow.
Loins, like a butter pot.
Alkatin, like a billiard table.
Back, like a large crowbow.
Vertebrae, like a bagpipe.
Ribs, like a spinningwheel.
Brisket, like a canopy.
Shoulder blades, like a mortar.
Chest, like a hand-organ.

Nipples, like the mouth of a hunting horn.
 Armpits, like a checkerboard.
 Shoulders, like a stretcher.
 Arms, like a riding hood.
 Fingers, like friary andirons.
 Wristbones, like a pair of stilts.
 Forearms, like sickles.
 Elbows, like rat traps.
 Hands, like a currycomb.
 Neck, like a great drinking cup.
 Throat, like a hippocras filter.
 Adam's apple, like a barrel from which hung two very fair and
 harmonious bronze waddles in the shape of a sand hourglass.
 Beard, like a lantern.
 Chin, like a mushroom.
 Ears, like two mittens.
 Nose, like a buskin grafted on him like a shield bud.
 Nostrils, like a baby's bonnet.
 Eyebrows, like a dripping pan.
 Over his left eyebrow he had a mark of the size and shape of a urinal.
 Eyelids, like a rebec.
 Eyes, like a comb case.
 Optic nerves, like a fire-steel.
 Forehead, like a false cup.
 Temples, like a watering pot.
 Cheeks, like two wooden clogs.
 Jaws, like a goblet.
 Teeth, like a boar-spear. Of his milk teeth such as this you will find one
 at Colonges-les-Royaux in Poitou and two at la Brosse in Saintonge,
 over the cellar door.
 Tongue, like a harp.
 Mouth, like a horse blanket.

Face, as misshapen as a mule's packsaddle.
Head, twisted around like an alembic.
Skull, like a game-pouch.
Cranial sutures, like the seal ring of a papal fisherman.
Skin, like a gabardine.
Epidermis, like a bolting cloth.
Hair, like a scrub brush.
Body hair, as has been said.

Translated from the French by Donald M. Frame

THE LAST DREAM OF THE LIGHT RELEASED FROM SEAPORTS

Timothy Donnelly

And such proceedings shall be considered criminal:
amusement amendments, two or more individuals,
any dream proceedings which engage in the activities

indicating intention, love, or other things of value;
a safe house, an individual boulevard, communications
that demonstrate the actor plans to commit rips

in new material, transfer funds, have everlasting vision.
Wendy, a sadness shall take effect on the specified
streets until the real is removed together with the findings.

If removal is unlikely, they shall take the sentence,
the beach facilities, and the foreseeable future into custody
and charge all with a criminal offense not later than

seven days after the commencement of such strap
from physical officers, offenses to the hide, such striking
dismantling electronic surveillance, wild highway!

The broken may be released on a table of contents,
except in the circuit where hands are provided,
mandatory madness, or the enactment of documents

along the northern border, where huddled personnel
trap adequate undercurrent, make criminal history,
and waive such intelligence as necessary for the purpose

of transcending platforms with certain maritime girls
during dangerous velvet, beyond wrecking trains,
beyond staff plastic and the sudden injury to buildings

provided for the placement, procedures for taking
the liberty of fingerprints, chrome updates of extracts,
a lookout for persons seeking to confirm a cost-effective kiss

fully integrated to soul points and a privacy database.
Wendy, carry out provisions to limit the authority
upon terms consistent with the feasibility of enhancing

clandestine telephone matter, the length of service,
and small activities protected by the united light of mirrors.
Headquarters are the field the first night it appears

in such mist as issued under the jurisdiction of harbors.
Acts dangerous to human life occur primarily within.
Any person who conceals in good faith has legs to believe

in domestic possession, a likely subject, the written scream
that produces new agency, a consistent sweat paragraph.
Center the lonely secretary in accordance with such guidelines

as defined by the dream engines, or by striking the engines
and inserting machines, a firearm, the town weapon,
or other device found on wanted tramps of prominence

who pose known threat to the amended bones of heroes
and higher education. This development is amended
each place it appears. Each place it is amended, it appears

again, appointing frauds of rearview, affecting deputy
and primary duties, committing unauthorized camera sadness,
counterintelligence, false access to disclosure mansions,

sprung local liquid, acts of text assault, and distinct verbal gas.
Wendy, stand in the wake of events, stand resolutely
vibrant in the worship of the possible, the fullest human hands.

New obstacles shall be established by the chairman of failure.
Authorized language drones shall implement and expand
written combat, chance procedures, and the day period, while the night

force shall determine public and personal want and want
removal with a program of general sense regulations, preventing
any means of notice, including but not limited to the light
released from seaports, from suicide, and from the individual dream.

THE GULF

Kelly Smith

Beach tar on the soft

humidity of bruises a passing wave lifted me
face flush with its surface

I woke early without memory a doll's face

I woke early I remembered

the morning changed color on the wall

and the others also waking

noise from the dumpster
an arm wrapping on a spool

how in the market

tones raised themselves in helix, stacking

selling food

machines that eat food

a cat watched discerningly

followed us with even steps along a wall in the gulf skeins were loosed
nets billowing what swims

we lay resting drinks on our stomachs

the cold of the drink ran through me like a pole

we were thinking again: bull or matador?

water flexed many spines what glides

LOVE AND ANTARCTIC LIGHT

Grant Ballard & Viola Toniolo

Editor's Note: The following are e-mails scientists Grant Ballard and Viola Toniolo wrote to friends while the two researched penguins in Cape Crozier, Ross Island, Antarctica.

FROM GRANT TO SASHA 11/29/03

We've been in the hut for two days straight. Before that, we had one day out, preceded by two more days in the hut. It's storming. Hopefully Antarctica is just getting all this virulence out of its system like a bad hack, and we'll be into a peaceful easy breathing scene soon. I don't mind all the hut time; in fact, it's getting easier as time goes on. Getting lots of reading and writing and thinking done now, which I always remember as some of the biggest plusses of coming here from back there. But we have outside work to do—penguins to wrangle! Last night V had to tie the front door shut with a rope because the wind was pulling it open. Now we're in a whiteout, with 50 mph winds steady, gusts to 70. Last night it hit 109. Definitely not good for penguin wranglin'. When it's windy like this and you spit your toothpaste down the gray-water pipe, it comes back out in a fine mist, covering the little mirror with a million spots. So we've relearned how to swallow our toothpaste.

At some point we'll get a helicopter with your package on it—but it might be a while. We don't have a plan for calling one in to resupply us, hoping that someone else will be needing to come here and be willing to bring stuff for us. Eventually, we would need to call one in to resupply the Fig Newtons and whatnot. Sometimes Santa comes in a big red helicopter

with seven friends (or as many as will fit on the helicopter). It's very strange and somehow decadent-seeming—but if no one else is coming, we'll welcome Santa with open arms.

Say hi to friends for me! Love, G

FROM VIOLA TO A GROUP 11/30/03

Hello everyone!

There is now a slow but trusty satellite connection from our little hut at Cape Crozier, thus this e-mail. It's exciting to be able to communicate, though e-mail definitely changes the nature of a place that otherwise feels at the edge of the world. But there is so much happening, and it's too tempting to write. Besides, you are the only social life we can afford here—how does that feel, to be part of the social life of one of the windiest and most isolated places on earth?

I am writing to you during a storm, so we are hut-bound until it's over. The wind has been raging at an average of 80 miles per hour, with gusts up to 110, since yesterday morning. These katabatic winds form high on the Antarctic plateau and then push downslope onto the warmer coastal areas with great force. Perhaps due to the topography of the island, much of this air gets funneled around Mt. Terror to Cape Crozier and over the pass where our hut is located.

Yesterday we watched the barometer drop with some apprehension, and just as things were starting to get really bad Grant and I headed out to our tent to retrieve our sleeping bags—just in case the tent decided to blow away. The hut door is on the lee side, but soon as you round the corner

on the windward side you get simply blasted. I was literally thrown flat on the ground in a matter of seconds. I scrambled up on all fours and had to crawl for a few meters before I could stand up with difficulty and head for the tent. Coming back to the hut and rounding that corner with our sleeping gear was equally challenging, and once again I was on the ground scrambling to keep the sleeping bags from tearing away. Grant let the wind take him a bit and sort of coasted on the rocks as if skiing, then hit the big boulder in front of the hut before turning into the safety of the lee. I pried open the door and was slammed inbetween before I was all the way through, but finally managed to squirm back in to warmth and safety. Now the air is filled with airborne snow from the Ross Ice Shelf, and I can scarcely see beyond 30 feet out of our window. Spindrift is trickling in through the cracks of our closed window, and once in a while we have to sweep away the fine dry powder that accumulates below. This hut is a wonderful place to be right now, and feels to us like a trusty little boat must feel to a sailor in the stormiest of waters—when the *ONLY* safe place to be is in it.

We arrived two weeks ago yesterday. The helicopter flew over the crevassed terrain along the south side of Ross Island, at the base of Mount Erebus and Mount Terror (two impressive volcanoes about 12,000 feet high from sea level). Some of these crevasses are so deep and wide you could literally fly the helicopter right down into the belly of the glacier. Erebus had its usual wisp of earthly smoke rising from the peak. We had to avoid it and ride around a cloudbank and over Wilson's stone igloo, a relic of the heroic days of Antarctic exploration. There wasn't much to see of the igloo—only a few hardly discernible base stones of what was once a shelter.

I am reading an amazing story right now about Wilson's igloo and Captain Scott's last expedition (when Scott and four others perished after reaching the South Pole) that I highly recommend. The book is *The Worst Journey in the World* by Apsley Cherry-Garrard. The author, who was on the

1911–1913 scientific expedition, tells of a sled journey to Cape Crozier from the other side of Ross Island in the middle of the winter—to collect the first emperor penguin egg known to science. Emperors nest on the sea ice and incubate their eggs on their feet during the winter, an incredible feat if you consider how harsh, dark, and inhospitable this place must be at that time of the year. When we arrive here in November, they usually have big fluffy chicks in their first stages of molting. We can see them from the Adélie penguin colony on what remains of the sea ice, their breeding grounds. Needless to say, that journey was beset by endless difficulties, horrible storms, and much mishap—as was the entire Scott expedition, starting with their boat journey from England. The magnitude of today's storm is nothing compared with what these people were dealing with in 1911, and they were doing it using nothing but canvas, wool, and leather by way of land or sea.

After the helo dropped us off we were left with the usual scatter of boxes of food, equipment, and supplies that needed to be hauled up the hill and reorganized into the small hut. The main space of the hut is about 10 x 20 feet (3 x 7 meters) and houses four bunks, a small kitchen counter, a table, a noisy heater, and our radio gear. We also have an entryway (also the pantry) and a tiny "bathroom" with a small sink (i.e., a funnel that drains into our gray-water barrel), and lots of storage space. The freezer, naturally, is outside, as is the outhouse. Never have I put off going to the bathroom for so many hours at a time, especially on windy days like today. Fortunately the outhouse is also on the lee side. There are three of us here: myself, Grant, and Rachael, a biologist who was hired as this year's intern on the project. Three other people are at two other locations on Ross Island, so we don't get to see them at all—we just hear their voices over our satellite phone each night.

B15, the giant iceberg that has been stranded in front of Cape Crozier for three years, finally broke in half last month. The southern half is

now floating around, alternately closing and reopening a channel of open water in front of the Adélie penguin colony. The penguins are having a harder time than last year figuring out how to get through the jumbled chunks of ice that have been pushed ashore by the iceberg's movements. There are fewer birds in the colony, and many nests seem to be failing because the birds are lost on the ice and don't come back in time to relieve their partners of their fast and incubation shift. Last week we donned our crampons and wandered out onto the ice to see for ourselves. We didn't find an easy way to the water and saw many lost and probably hungry penguins laboring over cracks and small ice cliffs. Grant found a deep ice hole with about 200 birds stranded inside. The walls were too steep for them to climb out, and so slippery that new birds were constantly falling in. We climbed in and hoisted them out one by one, then G chopped a ramp out of a block of ice that we rigged up as an escape route for the new birds that would inevitably fall in again. It was hard work, and the birds were exhausted, starved, covered in green poop (that's what happens when they metabolize their own fat), and absolutely terrified of us. They put up a hard fight, and we had to corner a bunch of them before we could grab them with our hands. G even got a small gash in his neck from a particularly feisty bird. I hope that those 200 green penguins eventually found a good meal. Our clothes were once and for all fully "penguinized" after this incident, which was bound to happen sooner or later anyway. I feel that much closer to them now.

The best news for this season is that we retrieved three of the 18 geolocation tags that we put out last year. These are very tiny computers fitted on Darvic bands around the birds' legs. Unlike satellite transmitters, which are attached to the feathers and fall off as the birds molt, these tags stay on through the winter and tell us exactly where the Adélies have been on their migration. It's pretty exciting, at least from our perspective. No

one really knows where these birds go in the winter—only anecdotal information has been available thus far. Grant just plotted the points from our first tag on a map. It looks like they go east a little, then catch currents that take them and the pack ice on a giant clockwise tour around the Ross Sea and northwards. This bird was as far north as 62 degrees south in latitude and was probably sticking to the winter ice edge, where food and open water are still available.

Finding the tags is a challenge. The birds have a tendency to nest in the same spot year after year, so we at least know where to look—but during incubation their legs are nicely tucked under, making it all but impossible to see the white Darvic band against the white feathers. So we stand in one spot and wait for this bird and that to stand up and stretch, staring at their legs all the while. I've never looked at so many bird legs. I even dream of them at night. Sometimes if we get close enough they'll stand up and stretch on demand, but then we have to be careful not to piss them off. It's no fun to receive a flipper bashing from the young birds milling around the colony. I even tried stretching myself in the hopes of inspiring a like response (as in contagious yawning), and I can now confirm that penguins don't have an instinct to imitate humans. The rest of our time is spent looking for banded birds (flipper bands that are much easier to see), marking and following their nests, and wandering around the enormous colony. As soon as the chicks hatch, we'll be fitting transmitters on the birds to see where they forage and how deep they dive.

The food is pretty good—lots of frozen stuff. I miss good chocolate and fresh vegetables, but so be it. We have a fair amount of fresh ginger and garlic, which makes any dish taste as if the vegetables were picked last month instead of three years ago. The frozen fish is a bit tough, though with three good cooks and the occasional box of semifresh food we can keep ourselves quite happy. Oh, the olive oil is terrible, and I often find

myself daydreaming about my mom's olive oil. But I'll mention it no further—can't linger on these unsustainable thoughts.

I miss you all and hope everyone is well. We'll send more news soon.

Love,

Viola

FROM GRANT TO SASHA 12/10/03

Our weather situation has improved dramatically, with very clear skies and relatively warm temperatures. We are spending lots of time outside, soaking in the sights. I'm slowing down on the Fig Newtons because they seem to be an old batch this year—a little scary. Most of the food we get is delivered via the one freighter that makes it in to McMurdo each year—the food for the next season arrives at the end of the previous season when the sea ice is at its minimum. So, all the food at McMurdo is at least a year old. In practice, however, it's much older than that. Most of our "best by" dates are, like, three years old, some worse. These Newtons don't even have a "best by" date—they're that old.

We're sleeping about nine hours—seems like we could sleep 11 or 12 if we didn't force ourselves to get up. I think we're still getting used to being on our feet all day, and the metabolism in high gear probably tires us, too. I recall going down to 6 hours at times in the past but don't feel that coming on this year.

The big drama of recent days has been related to the emperor penguins—which you'll recall nest on the ice, not on the land like Adélies. Well, their piece of ice split in half, with one part remaining attached

to the fast ice (in turn attached to land) and the other piece floating off to the NW. Most of the adults seem to have been on the part that went to sea, while most of the chicks were on the part that remained behind. For a while we were worried that the chicks would never get another meal—they were left with a 30-foot drop to the ocean, and they can't swim yet. Much of the story happens without an audience (i.e., while we sleep or out of reach of our binoculars), but it appears that many of the adults found their way back to the chicks and are coaxing them off the ice shelf via tricky systems of cracks and ledges—beckoning with their weird space invader bellows and trumpets.

Time to go out and see what there is to be seen!

Love, G

FROM VIOLA TO SASHA, MATT, AND ANDREA 12/13/03

Dearest Squeee, Otto, and A,

You are the best! We heard a helicopter today while we were down in the colony wrangling penguins, and upon our return we found a lovely package wrapped with blue duct tape that came all the way from San Francisco. I bet Antarctica has never seen Peet's chocolate-covered blackberries before! Thank you so much for the coffee, goodies, and letter. And extra special thanks to A for the photo! It's a nice contrast to our present scruffy, penguin selves. I hope we can look that clean again some day.

The storms have subsided. We had a rough first couple of weeks of bad weather and many hut days in a row. We got a lot of reading done. I read the new book by NPR's Anne Garrels, whose husky voice you might recall from the last Gulf War, about her stint as one of the few nonembedded

American journalists in Baghdad. Then came *The Botany of Desire*, about our relationship to four domesticated plants (and the speculation that maybe it was these plants that domesticated us!). We have about 10 books between the three of us, and with more storms on the horizon they are barely sufficient to keep us happy. If we finish all of them we either have to (1) reread them, (2) start memorizing the old *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, or (3) memorize the nutrition information on our cereal boxes. Alternatively we can just sit around sipping Peet's Organic Gaia's Blend, eating dark chocolate filled with roasted hazelnuts, and drinking shots of Balvenie. What a life, huh? Poor penguin biologists living in the middle of a cold, harsh, stark, desolate, icy continent.

I wish I could show you around Cape Crozier. The ocean fills about 120 degrees of our view to the north, and each day we get to watch the movements of giant icebergs, pack ice, brash ice, sea ice, and bergy bits. It never looks the same. One iceberg looks like a big pyramid, while the next is perfectly flat and square—like a big cake baked in a Pyrex pan and covered with vanilla frosting. One day the huge iceberg is 10 km away, and the next day it's so close that there is barely any open water to be seen. Yesterday the ocean was filled with minke whales and orcas, and the surface of the water was churning with swimming, porpoising penguins. Everybody was out feeding. It was like a big party, an enormous feast. You could hear the whales all the way from the hut, which is almost a mile away. That's how quiet this place is—you can hear the breathing of whales. What does the breath of a whale sound like, you might ask? It's deep like an echo from the bottom of a well, soft like the swooshing of new snow, and big—like, well, a whale. It's the most beautiful sound I have ever heard. The penguins are loud, too, but you can't see them or hear them from the hut. The frequency of their voices is too high to carry very far, and their colony lies behind a small hill to the northeast. Behind us rises the 12,000-foot cone of Mt. Terror and a myriad of smaller peaks

with jutting bedrock and ice fields in between. The sky is often streaked with hues of blue, mauve, dark purple, and faint pinks. The snow fields are sculpted into what the Russians call *sastrugi*, which means “wind-carved snow.” The edge between ice and water down near the colony is filled with snow petrels, which are small, pure-white seabirds with deep-black bills and legs. They are exceptional fliers, especially in windy conditions. They swoop around in big figure eights like windblown feathers.

We’ve been doing a lot of penguin wrangling lately and meeting lots of eccentric penguin characters, like the lone grumbling penguin we saw today. He just walked and grumbled, and his grumbling changed tone slightly with each step. Not sure what was on his mind. Once in a while we see a penguin beset by fits of the hiccups—they wander aimlessly through the snow and every 30 seconds or so hiccup out loud. You can hear them through the whole colony. There are also the ninjas who like to practice beating up on intruders of whatever size and shape. They let out a primal scream of warning and then proceed to hurl themselves at your tender flesh and bite. The scream scares the living hell out of me even if I see it coming, but I usually manage to have a staring contest that I invariably win (they get embarrassed and look away). On the other end of the spectrum, you have the occasional bird that just can’t deal with you at all and either runs (usually in the direction you are heading, so it keeps getting scared) or starts growling, stretches its whole body upwards, and hops sideways in a circle. But most are mainly doing their thing and giving us scant attention. They have serious chick feeding business to deal with, and nothing can stop them. And this year there is so much ice blocking their access to the water that they really can’t waste any time.

Lots of love to you all and be well,

Viola

FROM VIOLA TO SASHA 12/26/03

Dearest Squash,

We're in the hut again—after a solid month of good weather, the winds have returned. The barometer started dropping last night; this morning we woke to a giant lenticular cloud hovering above the peak of Mount Terror. These lens-shaped clouds are indicative of exceptionally high winds in the upper atmosphere. We watched several bulbous stringy clouds expand and contract just above the ocean to the north. Then came the drifting wet snow and, finally, the wind. It's been blowing at a steady 70 to 90 mph since noon. Seems like the upper atmosphere is paying us a visit. G and I managed to retrieve our sleeping gear from the tent while the wind was still at 60 mph, which was much easier than last time. We'll be in here until it's over. Aside from a thin layer of snowdrift that obscures the ground, it's still quite clear outside. The bare rock downhill from here is streaked with snaking snowdrifts, and the surface of the sea is whipped up into foamy, frenetic little waves. The grounded icebergs just offshore are glowing with the crisp Antarctic light, and all the brash ice floating on the sea's surface is traveling north under the influence of the southerly winds.

Yesterday we witnessed a unique Antarctic spectacle. A piece of B15, the big iceberg that we always talk about, finally broke loose and started rotating around. When we woke up yesterday morning it had positioned itself so that its SW corner was pointing towards the penguin colony, with its S and W sides going off into a V on either side. It looked like a giant iceberg cone was moving toward us. To get a good idea of what happened next, you have to picture our shoreline first. Imagine you are walking down a hillside covered with nesting penguins. You stop and look out toward the sea. Below you is a frozen beach, also covered with nesting penguins. Just beyond the beach is a strip of flat,

thick sea ice maybe ½ mile wide. This ice is also covered with penguins that are traveling to and from the open sea, which lies dark and calm almost one mile out. A few seals are dozing by their breathing hole 30 yards from the beach. Between the flat ice and the sea is an area of "pressure" ice that formed when B15 smashed into the coast three years ago. Imagine two tectonic plates coming together. This is basically what pressure ice looks like—a big pile of smashed up bits of bergs that have been grounded ashore and left there to look like a small mountain range. Some chunks are large and stand tall and flat-topped like big mesas in the desert. Some are crooked and jagged and have sloping tops. Some have been turned upside-down. At the base of the big chunks are the smaller chunks, icy debris created by the "tectonic" impact. This is what the penguins have to negotiate every time they want to reach open water. It's pure chaos. Anyway, we have grown quite fond of the grounded bergs, especially the larger pieces with their deep blue cracks and fantastic shapes.

At 4:00 PM yesterday Grant and I were tagging penguins when we heard a deep rumble, like distant thunder. The piece of B15, perhaps carried by the momentum of an incoming tide, was headed for Cape Crozier like an enormous bulldozer, and these bergs were in the way. The rumble was the initial impact. We looked up and saw the tallest, most distant grounded berg split in half—one half peeling off and falling into the crack below. A fine dry ice powder filled the air, like ash after a fire. We raced up the hill to get a better look: B15 was indeed coming in, its movements practically imperceptible save for the constant thundering and the ice disintegrating before our eyes. Soon an expanding slick of penguins appeared on the surface of B15 behind the impact zone—they must have been able to climb up on the iceberg and get away before it closed in on them. The seals all reared up their lazy heads (usually there is nothing that can disturb them; even a snowball is hardly enough to make them open but a single eye) and started for their hole.

The rumbling and crumbling continued for the better part of two hours while we stared in complete awe. I kept expecting the strip of flat ice between the pressure zone and the beach to heave up and give, but it never did. B15 eventually stopped and retreated, perhaps again under the influence of a shifting tide. The grounded bergs are still there, though they are now more crumbled and bluer than before. It was an amazing thing to witness, rare and exceptional like the falling of a redwood tree in a quiet coastal forest. Today B15 is farther away, and there are still some penguins on it. The sides of the iceberg are steep and not so easy for them to descend.

Crashing icebergs aside, we've been exceptionally busy tracking penguins with transmitters, banding and tagging new birds, and following individual nests. The chicks are getting so big that their parents can't sit on them anymore. They are big, dark, fuzzy, and floppy—essentially, they are stomachs with little heads, big feet, and two tiny velvety flippers. Yesterday we found a dead one and dissected it to see what the parents had been feeding it. Its stomach was filled with pink krill, which look like little tiny shrimp with black beady eyes. No wonder they poop pink!

We have a month left, which already seems too short. I am happy as ever to be here—it feels very peaceful, and there is absolutely nothing to stress about. Time is mine. I don't have to follow anyone else's schedule. Money is nonexistent. And penguins take up all of my energy, so there is little of it left for any other nonsense. I wish I could feel this way all the time.

Love,

Vee

FROM GRANT TO SASHA 1/06/04

Two days ago, the three of us came to the simultaneous and unprovoked conclusion that our time here is running short—just a bit more than two weeks left in the field! We have to do all the things we promised ourselves we would do: write in our journals, read lots of books, write papers, write letters, cook fantastic desserts, climb Post Office Hill, hike to Wilson's Igloo, go skiing, stay up all "night" and take pictures, go swimming. Now is the time when the penguins still appear to be permanent year-round residents of Crozier, very seriously defending their spaces and getting all dirty in the process, their chicks not big enough to fend for themselves or even seem capable of ever being grown-ups. In two weeks, this place will be very different: the weather will be colder again, many of the penguins will have begun their quest for a good molting spot farther north, and the chicks will be starting to realize their parents won't be feeding them for much longer, if at all. Time to GET SERIOUS! What a bummer.

I realized three days ago that I forgot to resupply the project with some very special cable-ties we use to attach small GLS tags to penguin leg bands (these tags track the penguin's over-winter movements). We have 45 tags to send out and only 18 ties! This amazed me—how could I have forgotten such a thing? Partly it was due to the craziness of departure—too many things going on at once. Partly it was due to the craziness of last year's departure from here, when I forgot to note how many remained in the stock. And partly it was because last year we didn't know how successful the attachment method would be: we've recovered 15 of the 18 we sent out last January (or 83%), which is about as many as are likely to be alive in the normal course of things. So now we love these cable ties very much. This caused me much stress for a day while I tried to figure out what went wrong and how to correct it. We've gotten used to a very precise lifestyle: everything we brought to the hut was on a list we used to pack in McMurdo. To suddenly need something that is not

on the list, or that we thought was on the list, is unusual. Also, the cable ties are not the sort of thing you can find in your typical hardware store, and they're not to be found on this continent. Luckily, we have friends. Ben, whom you probably met at one or another party and who was with us last year here, has arranged to have some FedEx'ed to NZ to be put on the next plane—which is the day after tomorrow. Setting this up involved e-mailing and even a couple of satellite-to-cell phone calls. You can imagine the shift in gears that has to happen for all this to come together—we still have to work out how to arrange a helicopter ride for the ties to Crozier.

We are recovering from an adventure to Beaufort Island, which left us all a bit short on dreamtime but big on dream fodder. There's a penguin colony on the island, about 50 miles NW of us. We can see the island from our hut window, but it looks very far off and mysterious (especially if you've never been there). Earlier this year we named it the "Beaufortasaurus" because it looks like a sleeping dinosaur—possibly related to today's rhinoceros, but on a whole different scale. There is often a mist of thin clouds veiling the upper reaches of the island. Every year we go there to attach radio transmitters to penguins; we also look for banded birds, measure the young, and make as many observations as we can in about four hours. We're not allowed to stay there (it's a specially protected area), and we rely on the use of a 350-foot Coast Guard icebreaker and helicopters to make the whole thing possible.

This year we were told to expect a helicopter at 8:00 AM, and to wear bright clothes and be as "large" as possible. The pilots had never been to Antarctica before and were unfamiliar with finding huts in this vast, white landscape; instead, they were trained to pick people out of the ocean. We did as instructed: when we heard the helicopter approaching, we ran outside with large red parkas on and waved our arms and stuff, but they didn't see us and turned around. I tried to call them on the radio, but we

don't have any of the same frequencies programmed into our radios. I even tried to relay messages through people in town who do have both sets of frequencies, but it was much too late—they had returned to McMurdo for more fuel and instructions (Raytheon figures it costs about \$3,500 an hour to fly helos in Antarctica, for some perspective). They came back with fresh coordinates and found us this time (about 10:00 AM now). Meanwhile, our colleagues at Royds and Bird had been waiting on the ship for 1.5 hours (I've heard that USCG figures the price of the ship at \$25,000 per day). We had a joyous ride out, flying over lots of penguins swimming and seals sunning and orca and minke whales cruising amid floes. Once we arrived at the ship, they hustled us into Mustang suits and into a small boat to take us ashore. The shore time was fantastic—we explored a colony of 50,000 pairs that doesn't see many visitors (we may have been the only ones for the year). All our work went according to plan, and we were done in about four hours. We found 50 banded penguins, many of which were from other colonies, making Beaufort seem like a penguin crossroads compared with Crozier—where we see a far lower percentage of birds not from Crozier. Beaufort's scenery is spectacular: a flat beach with a 15' ice wall all the way along its edge keeping the waves off, with highly eroded volcanic cliffs hanging above and a glacier wrapping around from a peak about 2,500 feet up. The erosion has left some thin spires towering hundreds of feet above the beach, and many boulders litter the flat area, having tumbled from above over the millennia.

After we were done, the CG came and got us back to the ship. There we were ushered to the galley for some juice and snacks—or so we thought. Soon an officer was telling us where our berthing was. The reason for our extended stay: bad weather. The CG couldn't fly the helicopters from McMurdo to the ship, so we were going to stay overnight—and were told we would probably appreciate the warm food, laundry, and a shower! The shower did sound good, but we didn't know how long we'd be away from the field, so the best thing was to try and get off the ship

as soon as possible—in part by notifying everyone that you definitely do not want to be on the ship any longer than is absolutely necessary. The sailors didn't understand this, really—most of them were 18 years old and on their first trip away from the States. The landscape looked heroic to them, and they thought we were insane for preferring a small hut with only one or two companions, no running water, etc. I started worrying about things like the door to the hut, which has a tendency to blow open in storms. What if we weren't there to tie it shut? What if we left the heater on, or a window open? What if something went wrong with the weighbridge?

Anyway, we started the journey toward McMurdo, about 70 miles—much of which was solid ice at this point (meaning we were breaking ice). Now, the berthing arrangements on a military vessel are not exactly spacious—on some ships they're referred to as "racks." Bunks are three-high in a room about 9 feet tall, so each bunk gets 3 feet, including mattresses and frames—not much space for moving around. We were put below decks, near the stern, also near the engines. And also, near the hull—so, near the breaking ice. It sounded like being inside a washing machine.

Next AM we're on helicopters back to our respective camps. The weather still sucked, but the pilots were game to give it a try. The ride back to Crozier was one of the bouncier I've experienced, with a 40-mph tailwind and lots of swirling clouds and some blowing snow. Very little definition (couldn't tell where the horizon was, really—just blended with the Ross Ice Shelf). When we got close to Crozier, they had to fly around some hills, staying under the clouds and away from the penguin rookery (which is off-limits for flying) while avoiding the big rocks. We got near the hut but couldn't see it through the thick fog. I said, "Just put us down anywhere around here and we'll walk in." Then the fog lifted—YAY! We were back in the hut by 10:00 AM, about the time I normally start waking up.

The hardest part of the trip was keeping up with the unbelievable amount of logistics—only to end up sitting around and waiting, followed by the urgency of “The helo’s on the deck. Get your helmet on and get out there!” Very strange lifestyle. That was the first time I left Crozier midseason.

Love, G

FROM GRANT TO SASHA 1/20/04

We are still at Crozier—another four full days and then back to McMurdo for about one week. Thinking we’ll spend a week in NZ in transition, but no firm plan yet. We received 50 lovely cable ties from our friend Ben. They arrived in McMurdo five days after I ordered them, and to Crozier five or six days later! Very lucky. Also, we have recovered from our icebreaker experience, and are facing another on Jan. 29 or so: we return to Beaufort Island to measure the chicks, band 400 of them, and attempt to recover the equipment we left on the first adventure. Last time I wrote I was feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of leaving this place; now I’m feeling more circumspect. We’ve accomplished almost every goal we set for the season, compared with the 10 to 15% of goals most Antarctic parties accomplish (at least according to the local version of urban legend). Maybe my biggest fear is that I’ll lose even a little bit of what I’ve learned here—the perspective, the stoking of scientific curiosity, the passion for discovery, the faith in observing. So much of the data I work with in Bolinas is stuff I didn’t collect, or that was collected by first-year interns still learning the ropes. More of a baseline monitoring objective. That, plus all the apparently necessary bureaucracy makes the pace of discovery much slower, not exactly heady. Here the context is set years ahead by carefully researched and documented writing—these are the questions, how will you answer them? We generate a single proposal in six months,

which is then reviewed by about 18 referees (mostly other scientists). By the time we get here, we know exactly the sort of information we are trying to gather, and why. We know where the last project left off—what data still needs to be collected, and more importantly what we can leave alone. At first it seems ponderous—but once we're finally here, in the field, everything moves all too quickly. Ironically, we are freed from having to justify our work in the applied conservation context (unlike most of the other work I do), but I find it easier to explain the importance of this research in that context. In fact, it seems that most of what I do in that other world justifies itself almost exclusively on the basis of conservation applications, ignoring the real reason anyone would want to be a scientist in the first place: the (selfish) desire for discovery. Returning, I will need to keep my peace in the face of more chaotic contexts, the whiff of false altruism, and of course all the wonderful stuff of my larger society.

Yesterday we hiked to the stone igloo, about five miles south of the hut. It's a site of historic interest—the place *The Worst Journey in the World* climaxed in 1911, and the worst place I've ever seen to set up camp. In the name of science, three men hiked about 80 miles on the ice shelf to this point in the wintertime, and they barely survived. They left some evocative garbage behind, and a somewhat orderly pile of rocks they used for shelter while the gales blew around them for three days (they were lying on their faces and praying, having lost their tent and facing various other challenges). We went for the lichen, which seem to grow in greater abundance and diversity there than anywhere else in this vicinity. We collected eight small rocks with lichens growing on them so that lichenologists can decide on one of the species' identifications. When I first noticed one of the species last year, I thought it would be new for Ross Island, but I've since found references to lichens in this genus (*Umbilicaria*) for Cape Crozier and Cape Royds, so it seems likely that the specimen won't be scientifically interesting. Still, there aren't many specimens from here, and this will likely serve as confirmation of one thing or another.

It took about two hours of fairly brisk hiking to get to the igloo—much of it on talus. A 40- to 60-mph wind blew from the south, but we were mostly in the lee until the final mile or so. We bundled up and figured it would make us sympathetic for the original explorers. There is much less snow on the ground this year, so the contents of the igloo were more exposed: several emperor penguin skins (they were using them for food and for heating—burning the fat, I think), a broken crate, a ball of twine, scraps of wool clothing, remnants of a canvas they used as a roof, or maybe the old floor of the tent (which they later found, enabling their survival on the return journey). It's fairly sloppy—looks like they left in a bit of a rush. We found our lichens and took lots of pictures. It's amazing to wander—even five miles feels very far.

Returning to our tiny hut, I realized the tenuousness of our survival here is clear, but so is our relative security. Our hut is only marginally bigger than the igloo the early explorers occupied, but it contains a VHF radio, an HF radio, a satellite phone, three computers and a Palm device with about a half-terabyte of data storage capacity, more than 100 gallons of fuel for heating and cooking, and enough food to survive for many weeks without our having to kill anything. We can make less impact on the land, collect more data, stay longer, and have a great time now—when less than 100 years ago it was the biggest adventure anyone could imagine! The data they collected hardly seem worth all their effort and risk, given how much we can collect with relative ease. Still, their adventure affirms the importance of discovery, the need for investment by humans to understand the world we inhabit. In a way it seems we're further than ever from a general belief in that investment. The heroic age of exploration was probably more evocative for the average person—they could imagine the adventures and understand the risks. These days the average person may be inured to adventure, but the idea of adventure for the sake of learning may have given way to the idea of adventure for the sake of adrenaline—or worse, adventure for the sake of profit. In this

way, perhaps, science and popular culture continue to diverge, which I have to believe doesn't bode well for our species.

It's also interesting to consider what our work here might seem like to someone a hundred years from now. Would they think this was particularly adventurous? Or not worth the effort? Or not worth the money (money, of course, is spent in vast quantities to support our time here). Really, learning is mostly a selfish endeavor, and what we learn may not help any other humans beside ourselves. A society's investment in science and art reflects values that are variable; it's impossible for me to believe I can imagine what humans will value in the distant future. Hopefully they will continue to believe in the inherent value of learning, as they mostly have for thousands of years.

Love, G

FROM VIOLA TO SASHA 2/05/04

Dearest, dearest Squee,

You caught us at the very tail end of our Antarctic journey—we leave tomorrow for New Zealand. It has been a full and fulfilling season, and I'm not ready to sit in the office again (the work that awaits me in Bolinas pales in comparison to what I have been doing here). But the penguins are leaving, and, alas, we must go, too. I'd like to hand my entire schedule over to the penguins, to let them dictate all my movements, to fluctuate penguin-like though the highly structured world we live in, to move through life with their focus and with complete disregard for the human clock.

Soon this continent will sink into darkness, and the cold will be deeper than anything I have ever felt—and there will be no penguins at all. All life will move north save for a few seals (who can at least seek refuge in the relative warmth of the Ross Sea) and a handful of crazy humans who have to keep this little town at the edge of the world barely breathing until the sun rises again. The sun is still high at night, but the light becomes more slanted each evening and stretches our shadows to great lengths while bathing the distant mountains with smears of pale orange, mauve, and a faint yellow wash. I can just imagine the long sunsets, the deep dark untainted by human light and pierced by the brightest stars, the endless auroras of winter.

I'm not sure how long we'll stay in New Zealand—probably no more than two weeks, just long enough to decompress from this strange transition. It's going to be overwhelming to the senses. Last year when we came back to civilization I felt as if I could smell each blade of grass, each molecule of water in the air, every bit of food being cooked wafting through the streets of Christchurch. It's amazing how fragrant vegetation alone is, and how unaware of it I am in my daily life. It'll be nice to have that awareness of plant smells back again, until my senses readjust and I stop noticing it.

Off to have a drink and then bed. Sending you lots of love and Antarctic light.

V

IN THE JANUARIED MOUNTAINS

Michael Earl Craig

My little horse must think it queer.
But who cares what he thinks?
Listening to an animal might get me killed
look what happened to Walter.

And so I go on.
Not just with life in general
but with this particular day.
And I allow things to happen,
like the snow to come down,
like Tom Waits' *Alice* to create
a tiny stainless drain somewhere
in my core this morning.

And I dig out and put on
a very old pair of tennis shorts
that look like a dinner napkin.

And I step out into the yard
and kneel, and pet the studded radial,
like running a hand across an open field
of steel babies' teeth.

And I think about flogging him.
The horse!
I think about going back out there to find him.
And I think about Klaus Kinski.
What would Klaus Kinski do? I think

about how in theory the hammer
is never to hit the anvil.
I think about how a butterfly, if
permitted, will crawl neurotically
all over a soldier's face for half an hour.

The snow sifts down like so many blankets.
As I move out across the pasture
I think about this . . . and Kinski. And anvils.

I can't say I'm surprised to find
my little horse breathing a dent for himself
in the snow. Nor that the dent looks strangely
like a baby Jesus. A baby Jesus on his back,
sinking into the snow.

SPECIAL

As I speed north up highway I91, passing Zortman on toward Malta, I look out and see a lone donkey on the open plain. Mostly snow and pale yellow tufts of grass poking up through snow. Now I see him, the 2nd donkey, hundreds of yards off, coming along with his head down, ripping tufts of yellow grass I'm guessing as he staggers about. I quickly rearrange it all in my mind: I see them as two gay male Montana donkeys who were previously alone before meeting up one day on the open plain. It reminds me of a rancher one time. Something in the way this rancher's mustache—the corners of his black mustache—how they curved down, it—it reminded me of the pincers on a beetle. I'm speeding along. I don't have time for any of this. I reach up and trace with my finger the word SPECIAL in the foggy part of the windshield above the dash.

THE FIFTH POSITION OF ASKING

Malinda Markham

The visitor knows a little
Of mercy they say or why conceal his face?

A horseback
Soldier wrapped the head in twine its color not

The accident you'd think. A breastplate
To sleep in a wall around the skin. In the sky

The Maypole
Will sever and drown. Sing the child said and covered

Its body with leaves
To sleep with the walls this thin is almost

Like dreaming all
The color at the throat there must

Be some joy. Even the young know a little
Of commerce they say it sings

In the veins and flushes the skin
Lace figure see

What you have begun tongue a pearl
In the master's ear

ORIFLAMME.

Sandra Miller

bees blown houses
blouse colored
best yule

in this corner
a violence
summer heaves

alter may said please take care
i would like to increase your lap
softs thunder

do take care to pet more
man's last apiary
virginia booms

prussian shun
reach the highland
four monarchies at a table
that chair is an altar
that chair
over there
i said an altar

thippy with it
sand

here we least poppy

the young
seamstress in league
with
not hops

pilt
the seraph
twin

pools

knees becked
what at our table gospels
too many police the room

rustended in a yard
where everyone's bird waits
blatantly

from lavender comes the ocean
with problems

i am sorry

a celliste
hard of honey
rehearsals for june

be yourn
be sworn into streetcar

better
let her
a hem

gish
in the gushes
alhambra
with it all
is it about us
tell us
is it about

he spied us from the gunner
we sacked him
his mother was over for dinner
we sapped her

saper
speaks spanish sadly

olfatic honeys
close birth star
i want you

the summer snare
honey have you been

priest
umbrella
sore afeard

from THE ANGLE OF YAW

Ben Lerner

WHEN WE FOUND EYES in the hospital dumpster, we decided to build the most awesome snowman ever. The author addresses the reader; the clown, the kids at home. Angels are absences in the snow, visible only from above. When it thaws they will stand up and search for the children they have known.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN ASHBERY

John Ashbery has published more than twenty collections of poetry, including, most recently, *Chinese Whispers* (FSG, 2002). A new collection, *Where Shall I Wander*, is forthcoming in spring 2005 from Ecco Press and Carcanet. His *Selected Prose* was published this fall by Carcanet and the University of Michigan Press. Since 1990 he has been the Charles P. Stevenson, Jr. Professor of Languages and Literature at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. John Ashbery was interviewed by Robert N. Casper in August and September 2004. The tape of the first interview was stolen; the following is from their second interview.

Critics on the left and right—including Helen Vendler and Marjorie Perloff—have championed your poems. Which tradition do you feel your work lies with?

I'm obviously pleased if I appeal to a broad spectrum of readers—I don't know how it happened. I think Harold Bloom was the first well-known critic to write about my work, and that caused other people to notice it. I met Helen in Boston in the late '70s, at a dinner at Elizabeth Bishop's. Helen and I were chatting, and she said, "I've never written about your poetry because I've never understood it." I appreciated her saying that, and I said I wished other people who didn't understand my poems would stop writing about them, and she laughed. The next night, I gave a reading at Harvard. Helen was there, and said she got my poetry when she heard me read it. We've since become friends. I admire her enormously.

You've said you want your poems to be as accessible as possible.

As accessible as possible within my own definition of accessible. That reminds me of something I read in Boris Pasternak's autobiography,

Safe Conduct. Pasternak's parents knew the composer Scriabin, and when Boris was a child he used to come over and talk about music—he advised Pasternak to simplify his thought as much as possible, yet Scriabin's music was horrendously complex and difficult. Didn't Henry James say something similar? "Simplify, simplify?" Or was it, "Dramatize, dramatize!"

There's only so much you can do to simplify a poem.

Exactly—and have it be a reflection of experience, which is not simple. I think experiences are bigger and more indeterminate and more ambiguous than you can put a handle on. The poem is recording that.

Let's talk a little bit about New York—how do you feel about it now? You've said you'd rather be living in San Francisco.

New York is a practical place for me to live since all of my friends, books, toys are here. When I've gone to a beautiful city like San Francisco or London, I've thought, "Why don't I live here instead?" And the reason I always return is that I would have to stop living in New York. I feel, well, maybe not at ease in New York, especially in light of recent political developments—but it's a nice place to be, because you can work without thinking too much about it. Of course that's true for me; it wouldn't necessarily be true for anyone else. As I've gotten older, I've stopped going out much, which was not the case when I was young. Back then I couldn't bear to stay home, actually. Now I like my desk and my typewriter, and I feel lucky to have a pleasant view outside the window.

Coming to New York was a momentous decision. I didn't want to at all—I wanted to go to graduate school at Harvard, but I didn't get in, and was accepted at Columbia. Kenneth Koch, who preceded me here a year earlier, said, "Oh come on, you'll love New York. There's really

nothing to be afraid of." It turned out he was right. Frank O'Hara really flung himself into New York, and all of his poems are redolent of this city (unlike mine). It would be correct to call him a New York school poet, but we never thought of ourselves as a school because we never thought of ourselves becoming known as a bunch of poets.

While in France you wrote The Tennis Court Oath, which you consider your most experimental book. Do you feel such experiments must come out of cultural isolation?

I didn't want it to be that way. When *Some Trees* came out, it caused barely a ripple of interest. I wondered how I should proceed—although I liked the book, I wanted to change it somehow. So, I just began experimenting without knowing what I was doing, which is probably a good idea anyway. I didn't expect I would ever publish another book and therefore didn't pay close attention—it was just a kind of therapy. I was trying to find another way of writing. Several years later John Hollander asked me to submit to the Wesleyan competition. I sent the poems that I had, and I wasn't really satisfied with a lot of them. Of course some poets find those experiments the most interesting work I've done, which is nice, but I would have done the book differently if I had had time to reshape it. I just thought it was important to seize the chance. However, for a while I did find a way of writing a different kind of poetry from *Some Trees*. I really like about a third of the poems in *The Tennis Court Oath* . . . the funny thing is I didn't go on to pursue this new way of writing. Why? I don't know—I guess because we don't choose the way we write.

Let's talk about your longer poems—do they require a different imaginative charge than your shorter ones do?

They definitely require a different *modus operandi*. You can't write them all at once in one day at the typewriter; instead, they're written from different points of view over a period of time, and you're not the same

person today as you were yesterday. This adds another dimension to the poem which the reader will not be aware of, since he can't tell where you've left off and where you've begun again. I like the idea of adding this extra dimension. I'm always trying to think of things I can put into my poetry which will change it—"It must change," as Wallace Stevens said. The downside is the anxiety about ever finishing it, which I suppose adds yet another note of terror. I usually write a poem in an hour, no more . . . maybe in a couple of cases I went longer than that, but then the poem is finished, it's a thing. And then one has to start thinking about the next poem, which of course is also an anxiety. It's never guaranteed that you're ever going to actually write another poem. Somehow one always ends up doing it . . .

I imagine you get used to doing it.

You never really get used to it—you're never assured you'll be favored in this way again. But it's an exemplary position to be in. It's like manna in the Old Testament: the Israelites were allowed to eat it each day, but weren't allowed to keep it—in fact, if they did it wasn't any good. You just have to be confident it will fall again from the sky when you need it.

Do religion and poetry intersect for you?

I was brought up Episcopalian. I'm not a regular churchgoer, but I do attend church occasionally. I live across the street now from an Episcopalian church—we actually have a terrific new minister, very liberal. Like many people, I constructed my own religion, believing in the things that I wanted to and ignoring all those other ones I didn't care to think about. So much that is wrong with the world is due to religion—be it right-wing fundamentalism in this country, Islamic fundamentalism, Catholic or Jewish extremism. It seems to me extremism of every kind is important to avoid. Therefore I've constructed my own (no doubt illusory) religion.

Is God ever the "you" your poems speak to?

Well, I don't think so. I never thought about it, to tell you the truth. I'm hesitant to make pronouncements on the effect my work has—I can only tell the way I generally aim it.

You've talked about the importance W. H. Auden had on your work—what did you learn from him?

Probably what rubbed off on me the most was Auden's ways of making abstract statements concrete—for instance, a line like "Abruptly mounting her ramshackle wheel, / Fortune has peddled furiously away; / The sobbing mess is on our hands today." This is a marvelous vision of the approaching war in 1939: as an eccentric spinster of a bicycle. And of course, the wheel of fortune is implied.

Has your opinion of him changed?

No, I think I feel the same way—but I don't reread him, nor do I reread any of the great poets that got me started (like Stevens or Marianne Moore). Once I absorbed what I needed, I went on to other things. Today I read a great deal of contemporary poetry by young poets, many of whom have undoubtedly learned from my poetry but are writing something different. And I find that difference exciting—it makes me think about how I can write something different myself.

You mention Marianne Moore—do you know why she isn't as widely read today as other poets of her generation?

People think of her as the dotty old aunt of modern American poetry. If you knew nothing about her—if you'd only seen a photograph of her in a black tricornered hat—you might respond differently to the physicality

of the things she talks about, and the way her poems shoot off in many directions. Her poems are like extraordinary nests built by a bird (such as the bower bird) interested in decorating to attract if not a mate than at least the attention of a reader. I like the fact that they fit together so perfectly according to their own dynamics. Elizabeth Bishop once told me she liked my poetry because it was semiabstract. I'm not sure she meant that as a compliment, but I took it as one because it seems to me that's what everything is. Certainly that description would apply to Moore as well.

And Auden, too.

Yes—and Hölderlin. I have a poem called "Notes from the Air" which was very influenced by him. To me, Hölderlin's poetry is something ephemeral that he grabbed out of the air, something continuing to escape even as he holds onto it. There's a book of Hölderlin's I particularly like called *Hymns and Fragments*—one could argue that hymns and fragments (fragment being a little something concrete, and hymn being aspiration) combine in poetry, are what all poems consist of.

I love Hölderlin's fragments—how current their form seems. It's amazing to think he was cooped up in that little room in Tübingen, suffering from mental illness, all the years he wrote them.

At least he had some peace and quiet.

What are your favorite parts of speech? Can you speak of the sublime swerves of the word but in your poems?

I tend to be suspicious of *but*, and also of *yet*. Students frequently use *now*—it's one of those crutches they must be taught to do without. They'll have been writing something and want it to be understood that things

are different, things have changed—so they'll put in a *now* that hasn't really been earned by a major change in the course of the poem. . . . I find I repeat words I'm hooked on, but when I take them out the poem risks going dead.

Are they words that shift the poem's rhetoric? Or are they descriptors?

They could be almost any kind of word—for instance, I find I overuse *and*.

I fell in love with the word thus in your poems—it's such a great word.

I can't think of an instance where I use it, actually.

Really? In rereading your work for this interview I often found myself saying: there it is, the thus! It implies a summation, yet you use it as a leaping-off point for the poem.

I'll take that under consideration. [Laughs]

In our first interview, you said writing prose poems is like riding a bobsled—do you use any other analogies to describe poems?

I forgot I said that, even though it was only two weeks ago!

Well, there's Dickinson's top-of-your-head-blowing-off . . .

When you really get absorbed by what you're writing, it's like the moment when a cartoon character walks off the edge of a cliff and keeps walking on air. It's wonderful when it's happening, but then he looks down and goes "Aargh!" and immediately starts to fall. But that suspension is a really wonderful state while it lasts.

BROKEN TULIPS

A is walking through the streets of B, frantic
for C's touch but secretly relieved
not to have it. At Tamerlane
and East Tamerlane, he pauses, judicious:
The cave thing hasn't been seen again,
schoolgirls are prattling, and the Easter rabbit
is charging down the street, under full sail
and a strong headwind. Was ever anything
so delicious floated across the crescent moon's
transparent bay? Here shall we sit
and, dammit, talk about our trip
until the sky is again cold and gray.

Another's narrative supplants the crawling
stock-market quotes: Like all good things
life tends to go on too long, and when we smile
in mute annoyance, pauses for a moment.
Rains bathe the rainbow,
and the shape of night is an empty cylinder,
focused at us, urging its noncompliance
always closer along the way we chose to go.

AND COUNTING

The villa sat on a cone of volcanic rock high above a waveless sea that stretched away to a cloudless horizon. The sky, if that is what it was, was eggshell blue. The architecture melted into itself, so that what was decoration came to seem the fabric of the building, a rude, uncommunicative armature. Inside many clocks were continually chiming and striking different hours. There was detail and some kind of curdled passion, not going very far, that evoked the negative way I feel about a job and so much.

Clark wore a Santa Claus suit the color of faded columbine. I haven't looked at him in September. He hadn't done much to salvage the manners that snagged us, like seaweed caught in a ship's propeller. This abuse he's always heaping on me—I can't take it no more. Organ arpeggios gurgled down from the landing. Creative types in shorts have the option of sustaining the momentum or letting it collapse like a string of beads on a cushion. She was instead dying for the eye operation. It was then that I realized I was part of the moving wall. Nothing could save us except the inevitable breaking of the text at the end of the chapter, a micro-redemption, like a green ray.

THE RED EASEL

Say doc, those swags are of the wrong period
though in harmony with the whole. You shouldn't take it too hard.
Everybody likes it when the casual drift
becomes more insistent, setting in order the house
while writing finis to its three-decker novel. Only when the plaint
of hens pierces dusk like a screen door
does the omnipresent turn topheavy. Oh, really?
I thought they had names for guys like you
and places to take them to. That's true, but
let's not be hasty, shall we, and pronounce your example
a fraud before all the returns are in? These are,
it turns out, passionate and involving, as well as here to stay.

TOLD HER TO GET ON WITH IT

At the pump, sticker shock reigned.
The lives of the residents were changed.

My head ached from those boulevards.
The distant bight
freezes over when it has to.

Flawed nourishment retracts like a feeler,
helicopters, penny lives
consigned to this pleasure as well—
I could see myself as a portion of malice
fading into the pollen of the grove.

The right of these citizens to keep silent:
cutting up things, bringing evidence, changing everything.

THE SNOW-STAINED PETALS AREN'T PRETTY ANY MORE

A chance encounter in the street, an ancient phrase offered by a delicate woman, sends him back to burrow in the rubble of his youth. A few viable wisps still protrude. It all involves fetishes, those poor misunderstood employees of the sexual closet. Despised worker bees. Those bondsmen are in town, bonding. And what shall I tell the sales representative when he calls? That we don't need any fireworks. We're living backwards. We're not making up for the mistakes of the past, we are the past.

He was sinking into a kind of lethargic kick the house had never seen him in. And was hiding in one. You, always so good at the old days when something you do for the young ladies comes up again in conversation, can you still conjugate? The gray parrot stretches his alarming scarlet wing, and the room falls silent, save for the hastily indrawn breath of a few of the participants. It's four o'clock, you've come late, that wraps up nap time. The old fake dilemma, not urgent. I've even forgotten it, so go on with your story. Man walks into bar. Stilled avalanches back up, in slow motion. White snow on dun cement. For the seasons to withdraw, cherries must first come alive, in a burst of somewhat embarrassing frankness, while the distant rumble goes on: the opportunity for something to do something else, for it to be something else. Meanwhile, the Hardys ride high. Why? They didn't send the blotch to me, the postmark is missing. And the stamp? All colliding, twisting like train smoke in the wind, rattled by the elements. To punish people after dark. Buster issued a warning. In the shape of a message in a bottle, cast into the sea off the Cape of Good Hope. When his sister found it some twelve years later all his prognostications had come true, yet they hadn't mattered much. No one had paid attention. Such, my friends, is the reward of study and laborious attempts to communicate with the dead. In the end it all falls to pieces.

WILD CITY

On the dust bed the frequency of the oscillations is rapidly becoming untenable. Make that amenable. Oh, and if anyone calls tell them I've gone out to lunch, which, in fact, I have.

Their anniversary turned back into bed. One day on our pollen chart I notice the spots of autumn are getting larger. The light is that self-confident yellow. I hear there's no perspective where you're going. That populous "upstate" of dogs and ponies. Why make a picture then? Nobody said you had to brook rabble. A little fretful calm is sweeter than shrouded peaks, large birthday celebrations of the new neighbor no one knows yet.

Good to get back to the queer stuff after so unstable an interregnum, and we fed the poor just as it says here somewhere we're supposed to, but who knew how ravenous they can get! Heeded at night, they go on for a while as programmed, until it becomes glaringly evident that the beginning has collapsed and the serried ranks above are leaning together for support, glazed by the wind. Go, dummy, and ask for ice cream, chocolate and vanilla, and a mechanic if they have one. My crankcase needs asperging.

While the trees were there a new and angry god took over. Pass the sugar tongs. It was just like it was going to be when it was over, yet still a lively sense of being barely halfway there in the sunny beams did glide. Weigh his parchment carefully.

Then lo, I love more than one, which is impossible, unless the whisper of wine itself susurrates otherwise, in which case I agree to everything. Here, let's sign a treaty, or tear one up, and the eradication of borders

will guide us more faithfully to the customhouse. An angel on a dime casts an inquiring glance in our direction. Sure honey, you can ride for free. We're all going in the same direction. But I have to go back and get something I left in the cast-iron drugstore.

DOLL DOLL

Aase Berg

These body parts everywhere—I want to gather up the doll. These ice parts everywhere—I want to gather him up in my cruel arms. These doll legs in the snow that he, the day before, forced to bleed before he himself cracked in his veins and his beautiful ice. This nasty doll face with slanted eyes, beard stubble, smiling. This nasty ugly man, cruel cruel out of reach scattered in the sly snow. I stand cold and watch seconds rush down the chasm of a scandal, which time is busy hiding beneath a powder of puppy snow, down snow, pinching rag snow of small small nails. I stand with scratches in the porcelain, in my strange doll face which has cast itself around my warm crawling muscle, around my face of ground meat beneath the tame skin. I am beautiful and the doll is everywhere; I have to gather him into my sly girl arms. The way the wolf howls at the moon, the way corpse wrecks sail silently across the silver lake in the frigid night. These child parts everywhere. What does he want with me, I who want to gather him in and make the deed into another deed. This cruel cruel man who has fallen apart intentionally and who smiles his nasty doll smile, carved out of the face in the aching snow. And I stand my heart clotted and suck on the pearl necklace.

X-RAY

The lemurs shimmering blue. Their sharp glass features, which only appear at certain frequencies. The sounds—deadly in their entirety—would tear the eardrums out of our ears if we didn't constantly stiff hold the bifocal muscles contracted. I can adjust my body at an angle, preferably in the pocket of light between the optical wavelengths. I would then be able to perceive the searcher's nervous ray, or maybe during certain cases of sparse twilight. The urclouds of our solar system would then move balanced—through the Skreak Chasms like limberly billowing, hard-red lumps of ether. From the corrosive odor I would also be able to localize the focal point of the lenses.

The lemurs shimmering radiation blue. To break minerals with light waves. From the mountains nobody living returns. This is clarity—concentrated spectrum—this is flowing burning glass. Out of the weakly corrosive odor I might also be able to locate glowing point of *Purgatorius*. In the crypt there is such deadly clinking and crackling; this is where the cornea's lemure queens rest. And on shelves of ore in the inner caves of Skrea, hard glass animals shriek, climb.

OPEN THE VOTER

Toothed whale
beached whale
open whale
open space
unwhale
of rubber rooms

BARD

Plankton:
Will be sieved through
the clangbottom of
the breastvisor
fatshield

FLED

Whale death, brain death,
cavity flushed,
spool-shaped,
lung-blowing,
sung

Translated from the Swedish by Johannes Göransson

DEAR BIRDS

Mark Yakich

Much is made of the size of your heart.
Or the way some of you pull an earthworm
To death. Compare for example, this portrait
Of my husband, the artist, three cocktails in:

Fish in the morning, fellatio in the afternoon,
Philosophizing after dinner. Sucking on
A hazelnut in haze and hard rain, he pulls off
It all: pain, politeness, and unemployment.

I admit, it does please me to think of him
Mourning my death. Tissue by tissue, he'll paint
The orange groves and narrow bridle paths.
He'll arrange colors like music that coats the ear.

So is heartache really a mistake? The question is
Realer than any answer can be: One comes upon
The hills and then the pills. But not everyone,
My little sugar skulls, can eat their mistakes.

BETWEEN SPRING AND PRINCE

Rebecca Wolff

I was little,
and I *would* get lost

the difference
between one street and another

Whole thoughts

Incuriosity
Uncultivated

terrain
uneven

native cobblestone
native pedophile

Anyone disembarking
thinking their own private

thoughts

much less likely to molest or harass
to step up or outside

East—one direction
West—another

Come away with us now
while we remember

the whole thought

WHERE'S THE FUNERAL?

In anticipation of the body
a quartet of horsemen stand

at a safe distance from the shore

the corporeal a baby
I bodied forth.

(And I am watching at the shoreline
collecting seashells
while I ingest

something special
to induce forgetfulness.)

Fruits are related,
but this here is a made thing:

No horses, no dividend:
the rideless nucleus.

In black, all in black,
as though to mock
a mother's sorrow.

You cannot have the body

until you make me one
in exchange.

BEAUTY

Peter Boyle

There are places on earth famous for their ugliness: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Ohio. What to do when you have grown up in one of them and wish to dredge out of your entrails fragments of sheer beauty? You live, for instance, in a small room with two women you love who devote their lives to maiming and poisoning each other. They are mother and daughter, or sister and sister, or two sides of the one beloved face. You bring food home to the small room and immediately it leaks over the carpet like the excrement of worms. Invisibly, carefully, you save money month after month to visit a brothel and make love to a woman you've glimpsed so many times in her window, a woman your entire being has wedded in dreams only to find her delicate face clenched tight around the pain of an abused child, and the one tenderness you can offer is to listen to the deranged trembling of her heart. Impotent, flooded with failure, you discover how the scar in the palm of your hand exactly matches the scar below her ribcage. When she folds herself up, takes your money and asks you to leave, you walk all night across a city of broken pipes and suddenly whole parts of yourself have gone missing. Eventually you sit down in the doorway of a hovel waiting for beauty to appear, so you can seize it and maul it and transform it into the living tissue that has always mocked you. Only then ugliness arrives and leaves you its cookbook for surviving death. You open the pages and already you are rediscovering your life, how every moment was unbearable, pure poetry.

DEATH

Yakov Druskin

August 1934–August 1935

When before death he kept saying, "it hurts," it came out as "he hurts." When his face grimaced with pain, it was something like a reflex, and you knew his soul was not in pain. The day before death he answered all questions with "good," and he also said, "the hands are good, the feet are good, and in the earth it's good."

He pulled the sheet over his face and when asked why, said, "to set the mood." When the sheet was taken away, he covered his face with his hands.

He died four times over two weeks. The first death looked entirely wise from the side, that was when he said, "the shoulder is tired, the arm is tired, everything is tired." The second death took place in total silence, he was growing colder and weaker. The third death occurred over twenty-four hours, he kept repeating, "it's all good," and he said, "now I am going to sleep." After this he fell asleep and then lay unconscious with eyes open. The fourth death was the most terrifying and incomprehensible. I think he was fully conscious.

When he lay dying the fourth time, perhaps two hours before the last death, a certain understanding came: not a word was said, he could not speak, but he passed on to me his legacy and seniority in the family. I saw that he knew it as well as I. It was as a kind of justification and transfer of legacy and seniority in the family, as a kind of harbinger of the final hour and the laying on of the seal. I never understood anything as clearly in my life.

He died four times, he sought the most favorable means of death and chose the most incomprehensible and terrifying: a gurgling of the chest and an outpouring of froth. Perhaps there lay the least peccadillo.¹

When death came to him the first time, he stared straight ahead of himself, noticing nothing and saying nothing. What did he see? Maybe he was directing all his strength to the healing of his heart? The fourth time he also stared without noticing anything, but it was different, there was horror in it, or maybe it was I who was terrified. But then he looked at me, it was when he passed on to me the seniority in the family. His gaze was clear and conscious. It came from one eye; the other was paralyzed.

Whenever his condition improved a little, he started to worry, begging us to call him a doctor. But when it got very bad, when he felt death approaching, he acted calm, indifferent to doctors' visits, and said he was good even though he knew he was dying.

Maybe what I called the second death came first, and the first second?

August third he fell ill. At night I ran with Lida² to the nurse's across the field. Under heavy rain to Kozmin's; at the hospital searching for the doctor.

The fourth. Strong pain until six. After six the pain went away, the night calm except he tossed violently and constantly.

The fifth. Seemed to deteriorate again, in the evening grows cold, without pulse, hot bottles at night. The first death, I think.

The sixth. Second death. Improved in the evening, but at night, nightmares.

The ninth. Possibly getting better.

The tenth to the thirteenth. Gradual deterioration.

The fourteenth. I went to the city for the day. As I was leaving he complained at the slowness of his recovery. When I came back in the evening, he was in a very bad way. I spent the night running after oxygen (don't remember when I did it the first time). The first attack. In the morning seemed asleep with eyes open.

The fifteenth. All day with his eyes open, either asleep or unconscious. Recognizes only by hearing. Speaks very little, with difficulty and indistinctly. Second attack at three or four A.M. Then—fully aware, but his speech as inarticulate as before, was saying goodbye to us. Then said he was going to sleep and fell into sleep or coma with his eyes open. Stayed like that until morning; I think his left side became paralyzed then.

The sixteenth. Pulse reappeared, quite good, he came to, asked who was with him. Then he spoke no more, it was too hard to speak, but he pointed. I think it was then that he asked to have the curtain raised and the window opened. Or maybe he had asked earlier, I don't remember. His eyes gradually became glassy, especially the one that was paralyzed. Late in the day or in the evening the third attack came, not one but several. In the evening he could no longer move. At eleven or midnight the gurgling in the chest began—pulmonary edema, I am almost certain that from then on he was fully conscious. Around four he looked at me. At half past five came the last attack. During the attack his breathing became stop-and-go, he was out of air, his gaze was conscious and you could see the horror. After the last attack his heart stopped but there were two or three more breaths, and his eyes became calm again.

*

I stand before an event of the fullest reality, this is why I am afraid to say anything, everything is dubious and worthless before it.

In the evening of the second day of his illness he felt better. I left for a little while. Returning by horse-drawn cab I saw an elderly man with a cane. He was walking with his wife. The sight was like a sign of times past, of a certain respectability which is no longer there. That's what happiness is—to run into your parents, elderly people occupying a modest place; it was happiness when, for instance, they saw me off or they met me in Pushkin³ as I came from the city to be with them for several hours. When I saw the couple I understood: happiness is no more.

And yet that certain feeling of well-being and tranquility had disappeared even earlier. The horror of its death united with the horror before the modern-day Leviathan.⁴

As any direction, once taken, points straight ahead, whereas reverse motion lies in the realm of possibility only, so, perhaps, happiness and the happy life are always what was and will not be.

Up to 1917 life seemed to improve every year. Those who called it progress neglected something profound and important. After several difficult postwar years life became light and empty like that of Mayflies, but there was also the sensation of talent and genius. And then all this collapsed at once. Now that sensation of tranquility and improvement neither is nor can be. The old and the new differ in essence and the difference is like that of his death.

At certain instances you can't say: God exists but gods and demons do not. At certain instances you can't say: gods and demons exist. At certain instances you can't say: there are omens and following them creates favorable circumstances. At certain instances you can't say: there are no omens. I sacrificed to a god. After some time I understood: the god

accepted my sacrifice and the circumstances were favorable. This god was the god of health, hearth and the happy life, the god of meeting between parents and their adult son.

I am no longer careful. I frequently disobey omens, transgress against rules of precaution. The indicators got tangled up.

If I say: a god has accepted my sacrifice, I was in contact with gods and demons—these are signs. The same with God, with immortality—they too are signs. You must choose the signs with the least peccadillo.

Is death accidental? Would he have died now, under different circumstances?

One time when I had some problem, I thought: This is what they mean by calamity. It went on for several days. But then I left for Pushkin. When I woke up in the morning I saw the trees and the sun in the window and I thought: I feel good. No problem, no calamity. August seventeenth after his death the day was bright and sunny, but to me the sunlight seemed to have lost its strength. And I am afraid the sun will never shine as before.

I think about him all the time, when I walk, read, go somewhere, and all the time I see those two final hours and that moment when he passed on to me his legacy and the seniority in the family. But today on my way home I thought: it just can't be that I'll never see him again, I'll see him in three years or thirty; I am so stupid for not having remembered it earlier. This thought came from firm conviction in personal immortality. Should the conviction disguise the beginning of oblivion, should it be only a feint of feeling and attraction to life, then life is meaningless and disgusting.

Death must find its place in a certain system. I myself am that system, and the death is not any death but a definite one. Oblivion does not consist

of forgetting the man but of forgetting the grief. First of all, I need to get used to the fact that many accidental things, many accidental events have changed. When I approach the clock to wind it, I remember how he wound it; when I approach the window, I remember how he stood by the window. I need to remember and maybe to perform every thing he did. But there's something else: I will never see him again and this "never" is terrifying. Immortality must exist.

Tiutchev⁵ has it that death and sleep are twins, and suicide and love also twins. Habit and oblivion, these too are twins.

If oblivion does not come from conviction in personal immortality and the meeting to come, then this feint of attraction to life is abominable.

*

When I used to hear that a man died, even a stranger, for several seconds I would sink into melancholy and anguish. Abomination of desolation, that's what death is. Now this feeling won't go away and I will always remember how in the final minute he clenched his teeth and there was horror in his eyes. Then the heart stopped, and he breathed several times freely and tranquilly. The abomination of desolation after his death, it is like tentacles from the other world.

The unique, unrepeatable thing is that the flower used to be beautiful. But it wilted and rotted. The abomination of desolation does not diminish from the survival of other, even more beautiful flowers: this one is gone. Can you say that the whole is beautiful? What whole? This flower, this field, right now. But the whole is incomprehensible within time. Time bears death.

I discover the beautiful as it is arranged in space but not in time. And music? When one sound follows another, I discover here a certain system

of the particular, I do not apprehend one sound as coming after another, but in the last sound, the sound I just heard, I discover the previous ones. This is not the same as joining the moments borne by time. The duration of a piece of music may be classified as a slight peccadillo, for the piece is already written and exists as a whole, I can apprehend it entirely, I can even learn it by heart. I see it as God sees it. But the life of a flower, that I do not see, and I do not apprehend myself in time, but only in the moment. Yet if God sees my whole life, he sees it at once, that is to say not in time. God does not see time, whereas I experience time as a certain defect. The comparison with a piece of music goes only so far because the piece apprehends itself neither as a whole nor in each note, whereas I do apprehend myself, but only in the moment.

Beautiful is the flight of a seagull. Its motion occurs also in time but perhaps it is beautiful because we apprehend it as an immobile line in space? And in such things as riding fast or swimming, time and change are felt perhaps least of all. The surf rolling in or out, the sound of the sea or the forest, the periodicity of nature—all these invoke a certain horror. Maybe time is not even continuous. When we talk about the continuous nature of time, we immediately refer to the line in order to explain temporal continuity. Therefore the continuous nature of time is not by any means self-evident.

One can say what is not in time, but how can one say what time is? Not any of the words that apply to things that exist can be applied to time, we may even say that it does not exist. But this nonexistent thing is the most frightening of powers and you feel best when you don't feel it.

Nor do I understand when they say that something exists in time. Something exists in the moment, whereas in time it is destroyed and ceases to exist.

They also speak of duration. This creature of time is entirely devoid of reality. It exists only in order to be halted by the moment.

From the fact that I can find beauty in spatial arrangement whereas time bears only death and decay, although it itself cannot be grasped and does not even exist and does not permit anything else to exist in it, follows the incommensurability of space and time.

The moment is the only reality. Then there are also memory, imagination and reason. All of them can be united under the name of ideas. They are the signs of moments. They put a stop to duration, they divide it. When I find the right sign, I name the moment, and motion and duration halt, they cease to exist, they become what they are, that is: nothing. For they do not exist in the moment, and nothing exists apart from the moment.

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. The beginning is a certain halt, cut, sign, it is the archetype of the moment.

*

Although the noise of the sea or the forest invokes a certain horror by its periodicity, we don't apprehend it as a temporal phenomenon either. Constant repetition of the same thing creates the sensation of immobility. At first it appears to increase distances but then it creates definite borders.

A happy life differs from an unhappy one not in its main events but in its secondary ones—by a hardly noticeable tint.

I started to experience a certain freedom: I do not always take precautionary measures, and if I do take them, then my heart is not in it. The

freedom that could have offered a certain tranquility, results instead in a repellent emptiness. I was entangled in the nets of omens and indicators. There was fear, but there was also tranquility and joy. I felt a certain link with what exists. But now the nets are torn.

In Leonid Andreev,⁶ Lazarus lay in the crypt for several days before his resurrection and he swelled up. He rose swollen and stayed swollen, and whoever he looked at, felt empty and bored. His gaze made men wither.

★

Dreams.

1. He starts to recover, he is walking, for full recovery they send him to Finland.—Yet how can he travel alone, he is ill. I go to the station to buy a ticket for me as well, and suddenly halt.—It's too late, he can't be saved anyway, he'll die just as he died the first time. I experience inevitability.

2. The four of us are in a room. I leave, go to the morgue and look for him there. Instead I find two corpses—both of boys: one lies contorted, his stomach on a trunk, his feet touching the floor. Suddenly I remember: but he was still alive when Mama left two days ago, she told me to look after him and I forgot. Maybe he died alone—then I remember how he lay like a larva or a striped caterpillar. I flee. I feel the boy cadaver behind me, in pursuit. He runs contorted, just as he lay.

3. He starts to recover, he even gets up. I think: now we won't permit what happened before, that is: his death. Still, some thought is bothering me, but not the thought of his death, since I know he already died once, even though now he is alive. Gradually the thought clarifies and I remember that we buried him, that we piled earth over him, and therefore he can never be alive again, even if I do see him with my own eyes.

When I dream of something, then, in order to ascertain that it's not just a dream and delirium, that my sense of reality isn't playing tricks on me, I start to recall the past and to relate events. In dreams the remembered event is re-experienced again, that is to say time does not exist there, whereas in reality such an event is completed, no longer existent, destroyed by time. In dreams it is waking that appears most real—when I dream I am waking, I recall the prior dream as an event that has ended.

I drew a line around myself, I had words that I repeated constantly, and I knew that I could be tranquil so long as I observed omens and remained within this circle. The circle diminishes distances, creates a certain order and well-being in life. During his illness, the only important thing was that he does not die. But now the circle is broken.

Some dreams are so simple and distinct that when you wake up you wonder whether it's worth making the effort to remember them, and in the morning you forget them. Meanwhile, these dreams are often interesting, some for their content, others by tone. Thoughts, like dreams, also have content and tone. Certain thoughts are interesting for their tone, and these are the hardest to write down.

Lack of joy in existence blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, for God, after he created the heaven and the earth, said they were good. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

A dream. After that incident (that is to say, his illness and death) he began to recover. I asked, "Can it be that a man died and was buried, and then began to recover and came back?" He answered nothing, but he started

to disappear before my eyes. I went through incredible efforts to make him stay, I didn't look aside, I didn't blink, but it was all in vain.

*

Every day I wait for a miracle, and especially before sleep and during the night I ask God for a miracle. Miracles must exist.

It is already two and a half months that God abandoned me. God abandoned me twenty-four hours before his death.

I was sitting at night by the open window and crying, thinking of how I accomplished nothing of what he wanted: I have not stopped smoking, I have not gotten my degree, I have not created a place for myself in life, and at that moment I felt God abandon me. It really was like a slight breath of the air.

*

The day of death is accidental, it could have come earlier or later. How to understand this? I will introduce a term. It does not explain a lot, but perhaps it will show the way to a certain understanding. Extending momentary existence along immobile time, certain events can be called the characters of a life. Death coming too early can be one of them, death coming too late, another.

Maybe there exist different kinds of time. There is the time of thinking and the time of living, the time of the participant in life and the time of the man standing off to the side. There is the time of self-awareness—it is no longer than a moment—and the time of recollection, when two times coincide.

Time does not last and does not go on; it is made up of moments and empty intervals.

I take a segment of time. During this time, I was traveling—I walked a certain distance. At the time of walking I noticed a certain uniformity of one particular part of my journey, and ascribed another part of my journey to another segment of time. I differentiated one segment of time from another. This happens when you make the same journey over and over again, when you walk the same road many times a day, many days. This segment of time I will call the large moment. Time is missing from it.

If there exists a certain harmonious order and well-being, and this is equivalent to the fact that God exists, then its criterion can only be my own well-being—a certain harmonious order of whatever pertains to me.

I imagine three systems of things. The first is founded on trust. But if I doubt and lack trust, what am I to do? The second is founded on reason. But if I am feeble and my abilities are limited I can commit an ineradicable error. I am guilty according to the first, I am guilty according to the second.

According to the third system everyone is guilty.

*

A dead man on the shore of the river of oblivion says: I died just now, I died yesterday, I died a thousand years ago. When my heart stopped I breathed once or twice. I breathed the last time. Between two breaths my soul separated itself from my body. The soul of a dead man on the shore of the river of oblivion says: I am being lied to, I am being buried. A moment passes, a year passes, a thousand years pass. I observe time

flattened, the events strewn over it at random. The past weighs on me, it stands before me like an immobile now, like a large moment, it is cold here and deserted. The dead man on the shore of the river of oblivion weeps over his body: how my arm was beautiful, warm, white. How my belly was beautiful, convex, soft. My chest and my neck were beautiful. He is sorry he can't raise his head, move his arm.

*

No freshness of feelings.

*

If a system exists—a certain order and correspondence—in which I cannot observe myself as an end, then such a system is amoral. That is, I should not be a means. If there exists eternal condemnation—expulsion from a certain system—it is hard to understand, for instance, if I have not trust.

Lipavsky invented a formula for incomprehension: the father does not understand the son. But as far as the horror of death is concerned, that is to say, the cooling of the arm, the numbness, the withering, here the son does not understand the father.

As perhaps the soul survives the body for a certain time, so the soul of pleasure can be separated from pleasure. But it can also be that for a long time, perhaps forever, the soul of pleasure lies dead or asleep. Then the pleasure amounts to nothing.

*

I want to know about the dead man in the grave, how he lies there, and where his soul is.

There exist errors of right reasoning and right inference.

If a single step already taken in life were reversible, then, all other circumstances equal, it would seem no greater miracle than the opening of a bud, the growth of a tree or the might of political power. Meanwhile there would be more seriousness in it, and responsibility.

The contrary of a miracle is not natural necessity but compulsion. Miracles can be neither imagined nor investigated. A miracle under investigation loses everything miraculous about it. It is what no investigation can trap.

*

Two errors: the error of ambivalence arises from forgetting a certain outside force that opposes your desires. Another error, close to the error of right reasoning, arises from framing that force as the law of nature, as natural necessity.

Heraclitus says: There is something that old age buys for the price of life.⁷ He must mean wisdom.

*

To start afresh over and over, as if I did not understand anything yesterday or as if yesterday did not take place.

*

A dream. He was running quickly up the stairs, jumping over two or three at once. I got scared: "What are you doing, you can't go up the stairs so fast, you'll get sick and die again." He suddenly changed, shrank, and I again experienced inevitability.

*

The final night of August seventeenth there was a concert in the community center across the street. We could hear the music.

For me that which exists decomposed into its final elements, and these elements are: the cooling of the arm, the immobility of the body, silence, death.

I looked for that which is always new. Death is that which is always new.

*

What do I care whether I am foolish or wise, if there is no happiness.

*

One time I wrote, "Even upon universal ruins and remnants . . ." So I aimed to prove the existence of God. But now universal ruins and remnants are upon me and I see nothing.

*

Truth degree zero. This must be the ultimate, final truth, when there are no more desires, aims, tastes, inclinations. But then there is probably nothing at all.

*

At the bedside of the dying man I saw that life itself is the supreme good, and that the cooling of the arm, withering, and death are abominations. But now I do not feel the good, I do not feel that my life is a good.

*

When the soul of pleasure died and life ceased to interest me, I saw that life is a good in itself, the supreme good.

*

Pleasure may be classified; pleasure from food, sleep, etc. may even be defined but happiness is unique and therefore escapes definition and classification. It comes at random and differs for everybody. When I said that the happy life is the life of coastal dwellers,⁸ this was not a definition of happiness but one of its names. Happiness may be unhappy, pleasure invokes interest. If there is happiness, there is love of life, but there is no love of life in pleasure without happiness.

Wisdom lies in thinking of happy life once it is lost forever, and in the art of living without happiness.

*

A firm foundation exists in that which stands. Interpret it so: the life of messengers⁹ is no more illusory than natural necessity. Absence is no more illusory than presence. And also: a certain motion, a certain fulfilled desire, a certain thought carried to its end—these are illusory. And all of these are one—a certain moment when that moment expires.

*

The sign of a dream consists in the absence of the firm and the solid. To the firm and the solid belong: my bed, my room, familiar voices, sounds and objects. After the best of sleeps you wake up content, experiencing

restoration to the firm and the solid, provided that all firmness and solidity have not been lost, and these are the minimum amount of happiness necessary for a life.

*

Lipavsky¹⁰ asked: "Can you feel that half your life has passed?" I said: "I feel that my whole life has passed." Lipavsky: "Isn't it time for us to think about the soul?" I: "Maybe there's nothing to think about."

*

Lipavsky: "Now that immortality appears unnecessary, perhaps we will find that it really exists."

*

One cannot pray to a passionless God.

*

Chance does not create any order, it is the seal of indifference upon time. Who places it? I don't know. It was foreseen by God, but it does not get placed altogether without my participation. But I cannot foresee what lies far ahead and sometimes I act inattentively. If anything exists that is indeed firm and solid, events do not change it, it lies outside events.

*

A slight peccadillo grew into a big lie.

*

Four rules:

1. Make the least amount of effort.
2. Maintain the monotony of my life.
3. Observe seriousness, that is, avoid events, decisions, actions and interactions with people as much as possible.
4. Avoid pleasures requiring effort.

*

A dream. I dreamt that I was at the cemetery, I approached the grave, I raised my head and I saw, in fear, that there was no monument. It vanished.

*

Several days later I really did go to the cemetery. Approaching the grave I remembered my dream and again felt the same fear. I raised my head and saw that the monument wasn't there. It vanished.

*

A dream. Georg¹¹ again came in the night and taught me to walk backwards and forwards in time and this was as simple as going from one room to another.

*

I understood something from that dream. It was he but as if under another name. The dream proved rigorously and incontrovertibly that he did not

die. And yet he died. An indefinite sign of an incontrovertible, evident proof turned out fruitless and useless.

★

Truth degree zero lies outside the system, but outside the system nothing is firm and solid. Condemnation means expulsion from the system. But any other truth requires some trust.

★

When you experience some sufficiently strong feeling or sensation several times, then at the moment of each experience you cannot say how often you felt it before, and therefore the location of events along the axis of time lacks fixity.

★

One needs to distinguish between pleasure, happiness and the soul of pleasure. If the sensation of pleasure survives the pleasure for a certain time, then this sensation is the soul of pleasure. Something must then exist between pleasure and its soul, and it is happiness, at least the minimum amount of happiness necessary for life.

★

Here are certain large moments. Many times a day I not walked but ran to the pharmacy for oxygen. The road went in a straight line to a big building. This interval for me became a large moment. Then one had to make several turns. There was a bar across the street from the pharmacy, music played there and drunken voices could be heard late into the night. At night to run past this bar was a large moment. The stairs I ascended not

knowing whether I will find him alive was a large moment. In the night at the window when God abandoned me was a large moment. During one of the first days, when he felt better, I went for a walk. This last walk when the sun still shone with its former intensity was a large moment. After this for maybe two weeks I did not notice the sun shining. Whereas on August seventeenth I saw sunlight again, but it did not seem bright, it lost its intensity for the first time, and this too was a large moment.

★

August 17, 1935

A year passed. I lost the minimum amount of happiness necessary for life. Even if I gain it back, if some rational order is present in all this, what can compensate for the lost year of my life? Besides, I don't expect that next year will be any better.

Translated from the Russian by Eugene Ostashevsky

NOTES

The philosopher Yakov Semenovich Druskin (1902–1980) belonged to an underground philosophical and literary circle that was active in Leningrad in the 1920s and '30s. Its members, who called themselves *chinari*, included the philosopher Leonid Lipavsky and the poets Nikolai Oleinikov, Daniil Kharms and Alexander Vvedensky. (The latter two were also the founders of the short-lived literary association OBERIU.) It is only somewhat inaccurate to describe the thought of these five people as Russian absurdism. Like the rest of the absurdists, Druskin published almost nothing during his lifetime, spending his days in the obscure station of a mathematics teacher, since that field seemed to him the least tainted by ideology. Unlike the rest of the absurdists, Druskin survived the Stalinist purges and the Second World War. It is to him that we owe the preservation of his friends' writings. His own philosophical compositions, whose Judeo-Christian existentialism is marked by extreme sensitivity and introspection, are as original and rewarding as they are cryptic and unknown. The essay translated here comes from Druskin's lengthy diaries; I am very grateful to the philosopher's sister Lydia Druskina for her permission to publish it. The translation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Joseph Ostashevsky, on the occasion of whose death it was undertaken.

1. *Slight peccadillo*. Druskin invented the *chinar* term *a certain equilibrium with a slight peccadillo* in 1933. Its meaning is deliberately vague, but the peccadillo is, as it were, departure from dead symmetry by either aleatory or voluntary error that constitutes creation in both the cosmological and the artistic senses of the word.
2. *Lida*. The philosopher's sister Lydia.

3. *Pushkin*. A suburb of Leningrad, formerly known as Tsarskoe and subsequently Detskoe Selo (until 1937, which indicates revision of diary). Druskin alternates between "Pushkin" and "Detskoe." I opted to keep Pushkin throughout, for greater clarity.
4. *Leviathan*. Allusion to Hobbes, characteristic of the *chinar* attitude towards the Soviet state.
5. *Tiutchev*. Fedor Tiutchev, Russian Romantic poet (1803–1873).
6. *Leonid Andreev*. Russian writer (1871–1919) given to reworking the New Testament.
7. *Heraclitus*. Possible creative allusion to Diels-Krantz Frag. 88.
8. *Coastal dwellers*. Allusion to Druskin's *tractatus* "On the Happy Life" (1934).
9. *Messengers*. Another important *chinar* concept, referring to creatures from world A whose presence may be felt, but not ascertained, in world B.
10. *Lipavsky*. Leonid Lipavsky (1904–1941), *chinar* philosopher. In the original noted by letter "L."
11. *Georg*. The Russian language and literature teacher at the high school where Druskin, Lipavsky and Vvedensky met. In the original noted by letter "G."

PERSONALS

Meredith Walters & Matthew Zapruder

Single, attractive construction specialist looking for brave little screw for building anonymous castles in the backyard.

*

Divorced lonely lord of the mansion seeks someone not too hung up on hierarchy. Loves walks, impressions, spanking. Dislikes: Being told how to turn my living room into a new chance operation.

*

Wanted: Horny middle-class professional.

*

You: Darkly prophetic in all matters. Me: Totally hot for surprise directives. Let's throw ourselves into something vaguely superstitious.

*

Trapped white rapper wants nothing but a chance to bring some boom to your box. I've got your beat in my meat. Let's spin.

*

Distinguished elderly Orson Welles sound-alike seeks pretty Judy Garland dance partner for fun, friendship and sticky summer drives through the drive-thru and eating.

*

Witty? Well, so am I, except I'm in withdrawal. Won't someone please me? You can do what you feel just right.

*

Freelance photographer wants camera-bag-toting yes woman to say nothing.

*

Cigarette sales associate looking for cool menthol-flavored shenanigans behind the Bennigan's.

*

I am just. Sometimes I want criminals to invade my chateau so beat a hobo and come to rescue my goodness. Don't wait for any further signal beyond this ad. Just make for the underpass.

*

Conniving preschool teacher thinks she needs somebody for afternoon naps in the craft closet. You bad little sandman! Send me measurements. Don't forget your tools.

BENEATH THE RIVER

Paul White

Like Marx the Neighbor up the street
thinks I fancy you
You are right to think

That I would noodle now
beneath the river just your scales in my arms
for minutes but plying out the mirrors
this circuited gravy has my blue eyes screened so I say
are we floating (*quietly*) my hush
Or is this Hallelujah

SEVERAL RELATED POINTS

Before a more newer and better world, I blew a vial of tears on your mistake. I took and then ate, seeing blameless victuals. So when I talk, I speak like normal. I pretend not to notice the bleeding elephant, the pygmies, and I want to say Sweet Babar, to you holy hunting knife, how is your spark? My spark is lovely, thanks. It is only a spark. It only takes a spark to get a fire going. I don't say things like that because I came too early. In our conversation. I have not first come to understand the conversation or what it was about. In all things, attempt politeness. I stroke my empty vial and turn on your light—

Dear Remembrance,

We have much in common. I have opinions too. Please come down. Whatever it is, isn't worth it. Deep beneath the blankets, passing wisdoms away like cards, sticking tongues in each other's dark holes. You whistle a contemporary poem that once translated, signals: U-N-C-L-E. Keep stealing the children's visions.

Signed,

William Shakespeare

*

the sky smears a stain on the soul and the remedy is frown. Squeeze your face like this. Like this. Many parties on the ground (I'm flying) look the same. These gatherings look like your face. What a man sees from above is his face. What a man needs in order to be holy is his precious hunting knife, with a hilt of his indecisions, with a weeping invisible blade. Here

is my holy hunting knife: I am swinging in circles. I require supervision. No one, friends, meets her minstrel by force. Certainly I have learned the methods that have made me a major success. Like winning a stolen land. For example, a noted Puerto Rican priest writes, after reading my book: "we must take and swallow the night, ingesting the gods like children. Further, we must play music real good. And like to dance." Forever I warn you, friends, that I may in fact be a threat, *by accident I have shredded our names*; none of us gets to know her inside.

RICHARD HUGO

Chuck Stebelton

Regeneration is attainable.

In the good jet nude hands

umbrella. Water always saw
ladders. Resonators of conduct

Work your fingers to the bone.
What do you get? On the dead

an idea calls a rotary fanfare.
Bouquets of here, familiar son

One would ingrain advice.
Breathe a distant piece of ink.

from NATURAL HISTORY

Pliny the Elder

PEOPLE

We are assured that the hand of a person carried off by premature death cures by a touch scrofulous sores, diseased parotid glands, and throat affections; some however say that the back of any dead person's left hand will do this if the patient is of the same sex. A piece bitten off from wood struck by lightning by a person with hands thrown behind his back, if it is applied to an aching tooth, is a remedy we are told for the pain. Some prescribe fumigation of the tooth with a human tooth from one of the same sex, and to use as an amulet a dog-tooth taken from an unburied corpse. Earth taken out of a skull acts, it is said, as a depilatory for the eye-lashes, while any plant that has grown in the skull makes, when chewed, the teeth fall out, and ulcers marked round with a human bone do not spread. Some mix in equal quantities water from three wells, pour a libation from new earthenware, and give the rest to be drunk, at the rise of temperature, by sufferers from tertian ague. These also wrap up in wool and tie round the neck of quartan patients a piece of a nail taken from a cross, or else a cord taken from a crucifixion, and after the patient's neck has been freed they hide it in a hole where the sunlight cannot reach.

VARIOUS UNLUCKY AND LUCKY ACTS

To sit in the presence of pregnant women, or when medicine is being given to patients, with the fingers interlaced comb-wise, is to be guilty of sorcery, a discovery made, it is said, when Alcmena was giving birth to Hercules. The sorcery is worse if the hands are clasped round one knee or both, and also to cross the knees first in one way and then in the other. For this reason our ancestors forbade such postures at councils of war or of officials, on the ground that they were an obstacle to the transaction of all business. They also forbade them, indeed, to those attending sacred rites and prayers; but to uncover the head at the sight of magistrates they ordered, not as a mark of respect, but (our authority is Varro) for the sake of health, for the habit of baring the head gives it greater strength. When something has fallen into the eye, it does good to press down the other; when water gets into the right ear, to jump with the left leg, leaning the head towards the right shoulder; if into the left ear, to jump in the contrary way; if saliva provokes a cough, for another person to blow on the forehead; if the uvula is relaxed, for another to hold up the top of the head with his teeth; if there is pain in the neck, to rub the back of the knees, and to rub the neck for pain in the back of the knees; to plant the feet on the ground for cramp in feet or legs when in bed; or if the cramp is on the left side to seize with the right hand the big toe of the left foot and vice versa; to rub the extremities with pieces of fleece to stop shivers or violent nose-bleeding; . . . with linen or papyrus the tip of the genitals and the middle of the thigh to check incontinence of urine; for weakness of the stomach to press together the feet or dip the hands into very hot water. Moreover, to refrain from talking is healthful for many reasons. Maecenas Melissus, we are told, imposed a three-year silence on himself because of spitting of blood after convulsions. But if any danger threatens those thrown down, climbing, or prostrate, and as a guard against blows, to hold the breath is an excellent protection, a discovery which, I have stated, we owe to an animal. To drive an iron nail

into the place first struck by the head of an epileptic in his fall is said to be deliverance from that malady. For severe pain in the kidneys, loins or bladder, it is supposed to be soothing if the patient voids his urine while lying on his face in the tub of the bath. To tie up wounds with the Hercules knot makes the healing wonderfully more rapid, and even to tie daily the girdle with this knot is said to have a certain usefulness, for Demetrius wrote a treatise in which he states that the number four is one of the prerogatives of Hercules, giving reasons why four cyathi or sextarii at a time should not be drunk. For ophthalmia it is good to rub behind the ears, and for watery eyes the forehead. From the patient himself it is a reliable omen that, as long as the pupils of his eyes reflect an image, a fatal end to an illness is not to be feared.

MEDICAL USES OF URINE

Our authorities attribute to urine also great power, not only natural but supernatural; they divide it into kinds, using even that of eunuchs to counteract the sorcery that prevents fertility. But of the properties it would be proper to speak of I may mention the following:—the urine of children not yet arrived at puberty is used to counteract the spittle of the ptyas, an asp so called because it spits venom into men's eyes; for albugo, dimness, scars, argema, and affections of the eyelids; with flour of vetch for burns; and for pus or worms in the ear if boiled down to one half with a headed leek in new earthenware. Its steam too is an emmenagogue. Salpe would foment the eyes with urine to strengthen them, and would apply it for two hours at a time to sun-burn, adding the white of an egg, by preference that of an ostrich. Urine also takes out ink blots. Men's urine relieves gout, as is shown by the testimony of fullers, who for that reason never, they say, suffer from this malady. Old urine is added to the ash of burnt oyster-shells to treat rashes on the bodies of babies, and for all running ulcers. Pitted sores, burns, affections of the anus, chaps, and scorpion stings, are treated by applications of urine. The most celebrated midwives have declared that no other lotion is better treatment for irritation of the skin, and with soda added for sores on the head, dandruff, and spreading ulcers, especially on the genitals. Each person's own urine, if it be proper for me to say so, does him the most good, if a dog-bite is immediately bathed in it, if it is applied on a sponge or wool to the quills of an urchin that are sticking in the flesh, or if ash kneaded with it is used to treat the bite of a mad dog, or a serpent's bite. Moreover, for scolopendra bite a wonderful remedy is said to be for the wounded person to touch the top of his head with a drop of his own urine, when his wound is at once healed.

SALIVA

The saliva too of a fasting woman is judged to be powerful medicine for bloodshot eyes and fluxes, if the inflamed corners are occasionally moistened with it, the efficacy being greater if she has fasted from food and wine the day before. I find that a woman's breast-band tied round the head relieves headache.

REMEDIES FROM THE LION

Lion fat with rose oil preserves fairness of complexion and keeps the face free from spots; it also cures frost-bite and swollen joints. The lying Magi promise those rubbed with this fat a readier popularity with peoples and with kings, especially when the fat is that between the brows, where no fat can be. Similar promises are made about the possession of a tooth, especially one from the right side, and of the tuft beneath the muzzle. The gall, used with the addition of water as a salve, improves vision, and if lion fat is added a slight taste cures epilepsy, provided that those who have taken it at once aid its digestion by running. The heart taken as a food cures quartans; the fat with rose oil cures quotidiens. Wild beasts run away from those smeared with it, and it is supposed to protect even from treachery.

REMEDIES FROM THE CAMEL

They say that a camel's brain, dried and taken in vinegar, cures epilepsy, as does the gall taken with honey, this being also a remedy for quinsy; that the tail when dried is laxative, and that the ash of the burnt dung makes the hair curl. This ash applied with oil is also good for dysentery, as is a three-finger pinch taken in drink, and also for epilepsy. They say that the urine is very useful to the fullers, and for running ulcers—it is a fact that foreigners keep it for five years, and use heminadoses as a purgative—and that the tail hairs plaited into an amulet for the left arm cure quartan fevers.

HIPPOPOTAMUS

There is a kind of relationship between the crocodile and the hippopotamus, for they both live in the same river and both are amphibious. The hippopotamus, as I have related, was the discoverer of bleeding, and is most numerous above the prefecture of Sais. His hide, reduced to ash and applied with water, cures superficial abscesses; the fat and likewise the dung chilly agues by fumigation, and the teeth on the left side, if the gums are scraped with them, aching teeth. The hide from the left side of his forehead, worn as an amulet on the groin, is an antaphrodisiac; the same reduced to ash restores hair lost through mange. A drachma of a testicle is taken in water for snake bite. The blood is used by painters.

FOR THE TEETH

Loose teeth are made tight by the ash of deer's horn, which relieves their pain, whether used as dentifrice or in a mouth wash. Some consider more efficacious for all the same purposes the unburnt horn ground to powder. Dentifrices are made in either way. A grand remedy too is a wolf's head reduced to ash. It is certain that bones are generally found in the excrements of wolves. Used as an amulet these have the same effect, and hare's rennet relieves toothache if poured through the ear. Hare's head reduced to ash makes a dentifrice, and with nard added corrects a bad odour from the mouth. Some prefer to add as well ash from the burnt heads of mice. There is found in the flank of a hare a bone like a needle, with which they recommend aching teeth to be scraped. The ignited pastern bone of an ox, applied to teeth that are loose and aching, tightens them; the ash of the same with myrrh makes a dentifrice. The bones also of pigs' feet, when burnt, have the same effect, as have the bones from the sockets round which the hip-bones move. It is well known that by these, when inserted into the throat of draught cattle, worms are cured, that by them, when burnt, teeth are tightened, as they are, when loosened through a blow, by ass's milk, by the ash of an ass's teeth, or by the lichen of a horse poured with oil through the ear. This lichen is not the same as hippomanes, which being pernicious on several grounds I omit, but an excrescence on the knees of horses and above their hoofs. Moreover, in the heart of horses is found a bone like very large canine teeth; with this they prescribe the painful tooth to be scraped, or with the tooth, corresponding to the place of the aching tooth, extracted from the jawbone of a dead horse. Anaxilaus has informed us that the fluid coming from mares when covered, if ignited on lamp wicks, shows weird appearances of horses' heads, and similarly with asses. But hippomanes has such virulent and magical properties that, added to the molten bronze for a figure of an Olympian mare, it maddens any stallions brought near with a raving sexual lust. Teeth are also healed by workman's glue boiled down in the

water, applied, and shortly after taken off, the teeth immediately to be rinsed in wine in which the rind of sweet pomegranates has been boiled. It is also thought efficacious to rinse the teeth in goat's milk or bull's gall. The ash from a freshly-killed she-goat's pastern bones makes a popular dentifrice, and so that I need not repeat myself, the same is true of nearly all female farm quadrupeds.

TREATMENT FOR BABIES

For babies nothing is more beneficial than butter, either by itself or with honey, especially when they are troubled with teething, sore gums, or ulcerated mouth. The tooth of a wolf tied on as an amulet keeps away childish terrors and ailments due to teething, as does also a piece of wolf's skin. Indeed the largest teeth of wolves tied as an amulet even on horses are said to give them unwearied power of speed. Hare's rennet applied to the mothers' breasts checks the diarrhea of babies. Ass's liver mixed with a moderate amount of panaces and let drip into the mouth protects babies from epilepsy and other diseases; the treatment, it is prescribed, should continue for forty days. Ass's hide laid on babies keeps them free from fears. The first teeth of horses to fall out make the cutting of teeth easy for babies who wear them as an amulet, a more efficacious one if the teeth have not touched the ground. Ox spleen in honey is administered internally and externally for painful spleen; for running sores with honey . . . a calf's spleen boiled in wine, beaten up, and applied to little sores in the mouth. The brain of a she-goat, passes through a golden ring, is given drop by drop by the Magi to babies, before they are fed with milk, to guard them from epilepsy and other diseases of babies. Restless babies, especially girls, are quietened by an amulet of goat's dung wrapped in a piece of cloth. Rubbing the gums with goat's milk or hares' brains makes easy the cutting of teeth.

BELIEFS ABOUT ANIMALS

In addition, wonderful things are reported of the same animals: that if a horse casts his shoe, as often happened, and some one picks it up and puts it away, it is a cure of hiccoughs in those who remember where they have put it; that a wolf's liver is like a horse's hoof; that horses burst themselves which, carrying a rider, follow the tracks of wolves; that there is a kind of quarrelsome force in the pastern bones of pigs; that if, in case of fire, a little dung is brought out of the stables, sheep and oxen are more easily pulled out and do not run back; that the flesh of he-goats does not taste strong if on the day they are killed they have eaten barley bread or drunk diluted laser; that no meat, salted when the moon is on the wane, is eaten by maggots. So much care has been taken to leave nothing out, that I find that a deaf hare fattens more quickly, and that there are also medicines made for animals: it is prescribed that if draught cattle suffer from hemorrhage, there should be injected pig's dung in wine; and that for the diseases of oxen suet, native sulphur, and a decoction of wild garlic, should all be pounded and given in wine, or else fox fat; that horse flesh thoroughly boiled and taken in drink cures the diseases of pigs, while those of all quadrupeds are cured by a she-goat boiled whole with the hide and a bramble toad; that chickens are not touched by foxes if they have eaten dried fox-liver, or if the cocks have trodden the hens wearing a piece of fox skin round their necks; similarly with a weasel's gall; that the oxen in Cyprus eat human excrement to cure themselves of colic; that the hooves of oxen are not chafed underneath if the bases of their horns are first rubbed with liquid pitch; that wolves do not enter a field if one is caught, his legs broken, a knife driven into the body, the blood sprinkled a little at a time around the boundaries of that field, and the body itself buried in that place at which the dragging of it began; or if the share, with which that year the first furrow of that field was cut, is knocked from the plough and burnt on

the hearth of the Lares where the family assemble, a wolf will harm no animal in that field so long as the custom is kept up. We will now turn to animals in a peculiar class by themselves, which are not either tame or wild.

REMEDIES: FROM BIRDS

A help against snake-bite is also flesh of doves or swallows freshly torn away, and the feet of a horned owl burnt with the herb plumbago. Speaking of this bird I will not omit a specimen of Magian fraud, for besides their other monstrous lies they declare that an horned owl's heart, placed on the left breast of a sleeping woman, makes her tell all her secrets, and that men carrying it into battle are made braver by it. From the horned owl's egg they prescribe recipes for the hair. Now who, I ask, could have ever looked at a horned owl's egg, when it is portent to have seen the bird itself? Who in any case could have tried it, particularly on the hair? The blood, indeed of a horned owl's chick is guaranteed even to curl the hair. Of much the same kind would seem to be also their stories about the bat: that if carried alive three times round the house and then fastened head downwards through the window, it acts as a talisman, and is specifically such to sheepfolds if carried round them three times and hung up by the feet over the threshold. Its blood also with thistle the Magi praise as one of the sovereign remedies for snake-bite.

MAD DOGS AND HYDROPHOBIA

If a person has been bitten by a mad dog, protection from hydrophobia is given by an application to the wound of ash from the burnt head of a dog. Now all reduction to ash (that I may describe it once for all) should be carried out in the following way: a new earthen vessel is covered all over with clay and so put into a furnace. The same method is also good when the ash is to be taken in drink. Some have prescribed as a cure eating a dog's head. Others too have used as an amulet a worm from a dead dog, or placed in a cloth under the cup the sexual fluid of a bitch, or have rubbed into the wound the ash from the hair under the tail of the mad dog itself. Dogs run away from one who carries a dog's heart, and indeed do not bark if a dog's tongue is placed in the shoe under the big toe, or at those who carry the severed tail of a weasel which has afterwards been set free. Under the tongue of a mad dog is a slimy saliva, which given in drink prevents hydrophobia, but much the most useful remedy is the liver of the dog that bit in his madness to be eaten raw, if that can be done, if it cannot, cooked in any way, or a broth must be made from the boiled flesh. There is a little worm on the tongue of dogs which the Greeks call *lytta* (madness), and if this is taken away when they are baby puppies they neither go mad nor lose their appetite. It is also carried three times round fire and given to those bitten by a mad dog to prevent their going mad. The brains of poultry are an antidote, but to swallow them gives protection for that year only. They say that it is also efficacious to apply to the wound a cock's comb pounded up, or goose grease with honey. The flesh of dogs that have gone mad is also preserved in salt to be used for the same purposes given in food. Puppies too of the same sex as the bitten patient are immediately drowned and their livers swallowed raw. An application in vinegar of poultry dung, if it is red, is also of advantage, or the ash of a shrew-mouse's tail (but the mutilated animal must be set free alive), an application in vinegar of a bit of earth from a swallow's nest, of the chicks of a swallow reduced to ash, or the skin or cast slough of

snakes, pounded in wine with a male crab; for by it even when put away by itself in chests and cupboards they kill moths. So great is the virulence of this plague that even the urine of a mad dog does harm if trodden on, especially to those who are suffering from sores. A remedy is an application of horse dung sprinkled with vinegar and warmed in a fig. Less surprised at all this will be one who remembers that "a dog will bite a stone thrown at him" has become a proverb to describe quarrelsomeness. It is said that he who voids his own urine on that of a dog will suffer numbness in his loins. The lizard called *seps* by some and *chalcis* by others, if taken in wine is a cure for its own bites.

EYELASHES

A crow's brain taken in food is said to make eyelashes grow, and also wool grease and myrrh applied with a warmed probe. We are assured that the same result is obtained by taking the ash of flies and of mouse dung in equal quantities, so that the weight of the whole amounts to half a denarius, then adding two-sixths of a denarius of antimony and applying all with wool grease; or one may use baby mice beaten up in old wine to the consistency of an anodyne salve. When inconvenient hairs in the eyelashes have been plucked out they are prevented from growing again by the gall of a hedgehog, the fluid part of a spotted lizard's eggs, the ash of a salamander, the gall of a green lizard in white wine condensed by sunshine to the consistency of honey in a copper vessel, the ash of a swallow's young added to the milky juice of tithymallus and the slime of snails.

REMEDIES FOR THE TEETH

Toothache is also cured, the Magi tell us, by the ash of the burnt heads without any flesh of dogs that have died of madness, which must be dropped in cypress oil through the ear on the side where the pain is; also by the left eye-tooth of a dog, the aching tooth being scraped round with it; by one of the vertebrae of the draco or of the enhydriis, the serpent being a white male. With this eye-tooth they scrape all round the painful one, or they make an amulet of two upper teeth, when the pain is in the upper jaw, using lower teeth for the lower jaw. With its fat they rub hunters of the crocodile. They also scrape teeth with bones extracted from the forehead of a lizard at a full moon, without their touching the earth. They rinse the mouth with a decoction of dog's teeth in wine, boiled down to one-half. The ash of these teeth with honey helps children who are slow in teething. A dentifrice also is made with the same ingredients. Hollow teeth are stuffed with the ash of mouse dung or with dried lizard's liver. A snake's heart, eaten or worn as an amulet, is considered efficacious. There are among them some who recommend a mouse to be chewed up twice a month to prevent aches. Earthworms, boiled down in oil and poured into the ear on the side where there is pain, afford relief. These also, reduced to ash and plugged into decayed teeth, force them to fall out easily, and applied to sound teeth relieve any pain in them. They should be burnt, however, in an earthen pot. They also benefit if boiled down in squill vinegar with the root of a mulberry tree, so as to make a wash for the teeth. The maggot also, which is found on the plant called Venus' Bath, plugged into hollow teeth, is wonderfully good. But they fall out at the touch of the cabbage caterpillar, and the bugs from the mallow are poured into the ears with rose oil. The little grains of sand, that are found in the horns of snails, if put into hollow teeth, free them at once from pain. Empty snail shells, reduced to ash and myrrh added, are good for the gums, as is the ash of a serpent burnt with salt in an earthen pot, poured with rose oil into the opposite ear, or the slough of a snake with

oil and pitch-pine resin warmed and poured into either ear—some add frankincense and rose oil—and if put into hollow teeth it also makes them fall out without trouble. I think it an idle tale that white snakes cast their slough about the rising of the Dog Star, since the casting has been seen in Italy before the rising, and in warm regions it is much less probable for sloughing to be so late. But they say that this slough, even when dry, combined with wax forces out teeth very quickly. A snake's tooth also, worn as an amulet, relieves toothache. There are some who think that a spider also is beneficial, the animal itself, caught with the left hand, beaten up in rose oil, and poured into the ear on the side of the pain. The little bones of hens have been kept hanging on the wall of a room with the gullet intact; if a tooth is touched, or the gum scraped, and the bone thrown away, they assure us that the pain at once disappears, as it does if a raven's dung, wrapped in wool, is worn as an amulet, or if sparrows' dung is warmed with oil and poured into the ear nearer the pain. This however causes unbearable itching, and so it is better to rub the part with vinegar and the ash of a sparrow's nestlings burnt on twigs.

COLDS, ETC.

I find that a heavy cold clears up if the sufferer kisses a mule's muzzle. Pain in the uvula and in the throat is relieved by the dung, dried in shade, of lambs that have not yet eaten grass, uvula pain by applying the juice of a snail transfixed by a needle, so that the snail itself may be hung up in the smoke, and by the ash of swallows with honey. This also gives relief to affections of the tonsils. Gargling with ewe's milk is a help to tonsils and throat, as is a multipede beaten up, gargling with pigeon's dung and raisin wine, and also an external application of it with dried fig and soda. Sore throat and a running cold are relieved by snails—they should be boiled unwashed, and with only the earth taken off crushed and given to drink in raisin wine; some hold that the snails of *Astypalaea* are the most efficacious—by their ash, and also by rubbing with a cricket or if anybody touches the tonsils with hands that have crushed a cricket.

MAGICAL CURES

For brain-fever appears to be beneficial a sheep's lung wrapped warm round the patient's head. But who could give to one delirious the brain of a mouse to be taken in water, or the ash of a weasel, or even the dried flesh of a hedgehog, even if the treatment were bound to be successful? As for the eyes of the horned owl reduced to ash, I should be inclined to count this remedy as one of the frauds with which magicians mock mankind, and it is especially in fevers that true medicine is opposed to the doctrines of the quacks. For they have actually divided the art according to the passing of the sun, and also that of the moon, through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. That the whole theory should be rejected I will show by a few examples. If the sun is passing through Gemini, they recommend the sick to be rubbed with the combs, ears, and claws of cocks, burnt and pounded with oil; if it is the moon, the cocks' spurs and wattles must be used. If either sun or moon is passing through Virgo, grains of barley must be used; if through Sagittarius, a bat's wing; if the moon is passing through Leo, leaves of tamarisk, and they add that it must be the cultivated shrub; if through Aquarius, boxwood charcoal, pounded. Of these remedies I shall include only those recognized, or at least thought probable: for example, to rouse the victims of lethargus by pungent smells, among which perhaps I would put the dried testicles of a weasel or the fumes of his burnt liver. For these patients also they consider it useful to wrap round the head the warm lung of a sheep.

BURNS

Burns are treated with ash of a dog's head, the ash of dormice and oil, sheep dung and wax, the ash of mice; with the ash of snails so well that not even a scar is to be seen, with viper fat, and with the ash of pigeon's dung applied in oil.

FRACTURES

For fractures of the joints a specific is the ash of a sheep's thighs with wax—this medicament is more efficacious if there are burnt with the thighs the sheep's jawbones and a deer's horn, and the wax is softened with rose oil—specific for broken bones is a dog's brain, spread on a linen cloth, over which is placed wool, occasionally moistened underneath (with oil). In about fourteen days it unites the broken parts, as does quite as quickly the ash of a field-mouse with honey, or that of earth-worms, which also extracts fragments of bone.

SCARS AND SKIN DISEASES

Scars are restored to the natural colour by the lungs of sheep, particularly of rams, by their suet in soda, by the ash of a green lizard, by a snake's slough boiled down in wine, and by pigeon's dung with honey; the last in wine does the same for both kinds of white vitiligo; for vitiligo cantharides also with two parts of rue leaves. These must be kept on in the sun until the skin is violently irritated; then there must be fomentation and rubbing with oil, followed by another application. This treatment should be repeated for several days, but deep ulceration must be guarded against. For vitiligo of all kinds they also recommend the application of flies with root of eupatoria, or the white part of hens' dung kept in old oil in a horn box, or bat's blood, or hedgehog's gall in water. Itch scab however is relieved by the brain of a horned owl with saltpeter, but best of all by dog's blood, and pruritus by the small, broad, kind of snail, crushed and applied.

REMEDIES FOR SLEEP

Sleep is induced by wool grease with a morsel of myrrh diluted in two cyathi of wine, or else with goose grease and myrtle wine, by the cuckoo bird in a piece of hare's fur worn as an amulet, or by a heron's beak worn as an amulet on the forehead in a piece of ass's hide. It is thought too that the beak of the heron by itself rinsed in wine has the same effect. Sleep is kept away, on the contrary, by a dried bat's head worn as an amulet.

APHRODISIACS, ETC.

A lizard drowned in a man's urine is antaphrodisiac to him who passed it, but the Magi claim that it is a love-philtre. Antaphrodisiac too are snails, and pigeon's dung taken with oil and wine. Aphrodisiac for men are the right parts of a vulture's lung, worn as an amulet in a piece of crane's skin; aphrodisiac also are the yolks of five pigeons' eggs mixed with a denarius by weight of pig fat and swallowed in honey, sparrows or their eggs in food, or the right testicle of a cock worn as an amulet in a piece of ram's-skin. They say that rubbing with ibis ash, goose grease and iris oil prevent miscarriage when there has been conception; that desire on the contrary is inhibited if a fighting cock's testicles are rubbed with goose grease and worn as an amulet in a ram's skin, as it also is if with a cock's blood any cock's testicles are placed under the bed. Women unwilling to conceive are forced to do so by hairs from the tail of a she-mule, pulled out during the animal copulation and entwined during the human. A man who passes his urine on a dog's is said to become less sexually active. A wonderful thing again (if it is true) is told about the ash of the spotted lizard: if wrapped in a linen cloth and held in the left hand it is aphrodisiac; if transferred to the right hand it is antaphrodisiac. Another wonder: the blood of a bat, collected on a flock of wool and placed under the heads of women, moves them to lust, as does the tongue of a goose, taken either in food or in drink.

Translated from the Latin by W. H. S. Jones

HAND

Mark Levine

Hand,
where are your deeds?
Tree hangs in its
one-time blossoms toward
your side of the property.
Unseen hollows
beneath your grasses and garments are
presumed to be busy with detail.

When you were in possession
of the pods and pens and octagonal plots
and your grappling hooks clattered in summer wind
and you loosed the bitter petal

when you, when you were . . .
One smelled the matted feathers
of the bird that followed you
to school, one crushed the mustard
powder in high season, one's
private medallions
remained in the pouch beneath the
chalkstone. Continue, one.

You could wield a pick you
could nail your boots to plywood with
what the local tradesman called "instinct"
you could shave light to a handful of grit . . .

There you were,
spooning syrup on a barely
visible winter
day without context,
one sharpened skate
sweeping the makeshift pond,
your print etched in the available layer
and the scent of action on your cuff.

GOAT TREE

Sarah Fox

The calendar becomes thin

We reduce sun into tree
steal it stand it choke it
with ropes and bulbs

Then are finished
Then pitch it
at a field tiny enough to traverse
with angels who cower in it

Christmas trees flung
over a fence for the goats

They line up The
field a junkyard of tossed
tender shadows

bleating bristling night winding
its horn around scenes and snow

Tinsel along with smaller twigs every narrow
needle their rough tongues
are blades as priests are
scraping to white patina
(are sanctified eaters of dead)
We reclaim

what the night made different
what eating did find a pot

for the polished limbs and nail
and hang fish&bows&tin
apples&Easter eggs

Do shapes build
outside a tree staked to a ghost

We prefer things that stay put take a dead thing
offer it up
to the goats They will make the most
alter one dead piece at a time

Does the tree remember Will
the goats the tree
The body knows just where
it's slipping hears
wild fruit low underground Softly

a heart grew missing the trees
lay beside where moonlight shone
skeletal Goats
purring and plump Sweet murmurs

(the night thinking the goats had finished)
Green strokes patiently filling their
supple bodies

Inside their chests
mint climbs and pecks and stiffens them

Bone yard The sloppy white
beasts Onlookers count up their pocket change

Prosperous Earth

for Laura Rawson

A road could lead to San Pedro. On foggy evenings women forage the trenches for certain overgrowths.
Collected in aprons and sung over.

Maria Sabina—Woman of a sacred and enchanted place I am

Could lead an actual man to drag his wooden cross behind him
tall as a doorway, wheedling gravel in rough boots. Women
bending their strong dark knees. Parting the pavement toward
a meadow where pelicans dive into wild nasturtiums.

There a hundred Chinese crows are already conscious and speaking.
Whose voices, in unison, sound
like the inside of a leaf.

Hippocrates—from the brain and from the brain alone arise our pleasures

The women evoke a father
figure, stethoscope. Their songline erases his eyelids. They say *circadia circadia*, sing it.

MEDICATION ROUTES: inhalation (*ska Maria Divinorum*) or "by use of masks &c"

intra-arterial (*I'm bee stung here*) via hypodermic, medicaments "into an artery" the very heart of me
 intracardiac (*an orchestra shot through and nothing but cellos*) oracular mediums obsessively virginal
 intramedullary (*alchemical wedding of then with when*) chalky marrow at the farthest opening, and spectral
 intrathecal (*lucid drumming, otherwhere phonics are not so brick-like*) subdural space, tap, taps, arise and go now
 iontophoresis (*the blue bloating where the feeding took place*) introduction of drugs into a deeper galaxy
 sublingual (*la mia lingua campo oscuro*) absorbed through mucosa: walks through walls or on water

In Rome women

On steps as flowers

In fountains as bird figures

In Mexico

I am a medication route. One of the S's.

Who is root or road. Moving carefully among fruit where shadows and bruises might warn/might warm.

The beginning of twilight is beginning.

Nothing like this lasts long.

Within us the moon might dismantle.

Angelica father's migraines, arthritis, apiaries: grasses colonizing his scalpel

Codonopsis the voice metallic and weaverly (women weaving), skipping a stone up a scope

Polygoni Multiflori our organs are gardens, pick one up, do you love me?

Herba Leonori crimsonly to plural us and kidnap what is dear

Paoniae Alba the very afterness of a sorrowful hope, skulls knocking about with the ghosts

I Ching—the waters on the surface flow together wherever they can

I and we are in several places at once now.
Fitful green glossaries killing time. We are sublingual machines. Roads and arteries, a little limp:

one gate is situated along a route on the earlobe.
I met a medicine there. A woman's spirit confronted.
Women at gates, in riverbeds, digressing in the service of transcendence.

Women pulling up roots. They are sturdy unclothed parting a wound.
The boundaries of the body are ropes, are roads and telescopes. Are muddy.
Are women monitoring the shore for signs of the wheel that moves us.

Linnaeus—to live by medicine is to live horribly

Fire: so many spheres make us itch; contained migration of inquiry.

Earth: a blue attention to inertia, poised.

Water: *nothing like this lasts long* boat in Peiping no the flapping fish no the everness and not breathing.

Metal: synaesthetical sand emerged through a ray.

Air: a surgery performed by clouds for the removal of blank so that trees can.

Probing resembles,

and everything goes: longing, moments, the camps on the body's borders,
the season of autumn and the icing-over of each and every

footpath?

Are not men are not women are

flowers in the mouth of that bird.

Pliny—in short, man can do nothing at the prompting of nature but weep

Our hands pretend to conceal a teaspoon of sand. It's hard to believe the crows would sing for this.

Or that sleep too has a roof over it, and often we grow misplaced there.

Caught in a bramble: plus the willowy pleasure of elegy

[is there no real survival more distressing than memory?]

Are birds in the flower of this eyelid.

A jar of foggy overgrowth:

- ♦ The furry sea
- ♦ The prosperous medicament chamberhood
- ♦ The trembling split-open arrival of boulders replaced by infants
- ♦ Smoke slurring across our livid contours
- ♦ The mask of distance evolving into fabric
- ♦ Touches accumulated in bureaus just beyond reach
- ♦ The cavernous glossaries of dissolution and singing

- ♦ This train is bound for a place called gone
- ♦ The moon *um* and its negative?

Huang Ti—When the death pulse of lungs arrives, it should appear like a floating object or like a hair blown by the wind

A wall where not gates nor doors through which swimming remains our only option.
 Wall which resembles body or *here*. Wall within wall without and within every wall presently to know.

At a certain point the breath must learn to adapt to its absence.

Jesus—I see men as trees, walking

The earth, this one place where we live.
 I met a plant there.
 When we meet again we will kiss for the very first time.

Maria Sabina—There is a world beyond ours, a world that is far away, nearby, and invisible. . . . That world talks

Pulling up roots, morning glories, a singing: which they eat.
 And become swans.

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OF *THE BREAKFAST TABLE*,
BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

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THE FACTORY OF WHAT I LOVED

Ted Mathys

The sawzall and pocket-hole, the tin-snips and j-channel,
the luan and the hammer, and the wrist; I spent
most free time on benches, freely absorbing
the pain of others; the mentioned and the century,
the rag and the king, the quilt and the helix,
and the wrist; I spit and somewhere the barn swallows
gather in a hayloft, their eyes burning like anthracite—
all heat, no smoke, no flame; is to be so thermal
to reconstitute the grounds for hope; *to give /
heat is within / the control of / every human /
being*; all the uncles uncomfortable in their skein of being
creatures of the so and so and with songs; "Angel Face, Angel Face,
eyes so bloo, come on over here so I can make love to you";
the trowel and the core-hole, the tongs and the level,
the wine and the knife, and the wrist; "Nappy Head, Nappy Head,
eyes like a frog, roll yo ass over so I can slay you like a dog";
inertia spits and somewhere the chimney swallows
hurl into brick, wings slap soot, as if hope
were sidelong, this pliant; the anima and the animus,
the public and the quark, the dream and the lack,
and the wrist, the wrist

WHO CAN (I) TELL? OR TRADUIRE WHEREAS TOUCH, A SUICIDE BEGGING

Nathalie Stephens

(I)

Inside Transformation

The body leans heavily into language. The body that leans heavily into language. It is, to begin with, an uncertainty. It is, to follow, a savagery. It is, to begin with, entropic. Widowing text. What desire exists. To fail even as I fall. If écrire is a prolongement to dying and the line break a rupture a chasm a chaste invitation to blood then traduire is head first against a hard fist of living, uncalculated, breathless, my face right up against hers. Outside of text says: Speak for yourself is suicide begging. *Is unburying your dead, is unlanguageing la douleur, is your syncopations, my awkward gestures, breath pushed back into me and new words to choke on, endolorie.* The body dislocates text. In text, the body dislocates. The body is the first place. With my hand in the book I pledge le néant, fastidiousness, disapproval. *My languages.* The phrase turns. These are lies. There is one language and there is another and they wheeze and rattle and what is mine is already spoken for. There is a third language and there are many more. The movement to and from is contested by the existence of text that is already speaking and I speak underneath its speaking with the voice of an étrangère. This is nobody's. In a letter, M. writes: "I think of translation as two currents at once. With undertow.

Two kinds of fallings. And a desired falling through?" Where the body becomes surrender. Without collapse. Without breach. A leaving. With the promise of return?

Two kinds of failings

Écrire is brace is heave is against is violate. Certainly, it is reach, but with no expectation to reaching. It is distance marked between body and breath. It is slow death suicide the line break body break and then. Écrire is self removed from self is mute is muted unspeaking is call uncalled unanswering. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood says: "I am a translation." I curl at my feet. I say in reply to no one: "I am not a translation." I see from inside. Text is the furrow to grief, deep. The anglais and the French of me, ma chérie, indistinct. Traduire is reluire is reliure is relire is above all reading and tell me, how does one read oneself? (*A feast a fast.*) I want someone else's hands on my words. Another body in my text. Écrire is already fêlure and traduire my fêlures is talking to myself is looking into mirrors is one hand breaking itself that redundant. There is enough alone enough cleaving. Echoes enough of echoes of enough of me. Traduire is to see. Look at me.

The furrow to grief, deep

Your dead are resplendent. There is inside the movement of language resisting itself, of bodies relenting, of words running into one another, of text entangling its own telling. You have made a book that is unnerved a book a dislocation a sentence for dying. A body other than this. Words other than these. Traduire the gesture of body becoming text. Moving through without settling. Moving to without recoiling. Entering without mutilating. Inhabiting without claiming. I mean the history of translation. I mean books unbecoming. I mean all those hands pushing inside maiming. Here there is so much room to move. There is agreement and there is agrément. Word by word I agree to come undone.

(II)

A body other than this

More lies. There is no passage through language without violence. There is no language that is not dismembering. There is no reach that does not collapse. There is no love that is not inarticulate. There is no word on its own that does not maim. Our languages are records of our bodies' trajectories. When we fall we fall short. First traduire offers fuite and I enter, I enter willingly. (Pull a knife over skin split what opens sinew is not ever bone and what closes is not closure but foreclosure and cicatrice may very well be scar but on someone else's tongue). In between language is the body's first premonition. Inside language is the body's fall, fail. There is the inextricability of one from other. There is the text as pretext. But what is source has drawn from somewhere else and what I touch is already changed and what is traduction is displacement is bodies decomposing is de-composition: blood, fear and excrement. But if écrire is desire for touch then traduire is touch itself and our texts are resilient and they are fragile and we are accountable for what we break and bound by what we swallow.

Blood, fear and excrement

Le néant begins as want as inconsolable as entreat. There is the leurre of self-sufficiency, the two languages into one, the body bent over itself, taking and grieving. There is the skin's fine incision and its determination to seal. Bloodless. There is the body and the other body sewn into itself. The reverberation of bone and something resembling steel. Gritted teeth hands chattering. There are these ten years of boning up l'écriture and the ensuing ruins. This many hard-ons. I want, with Kristeva, to believe, "mais pour la traduire, c'est-à-dire la trahir, la transposer, s'en libérer." My infidelity. My infinite gender. My ending. To translate you is to remove what part of me obstructs. To translate myself is to remove the rest, restlessness, abjection, mediocrity. Pare, parse, éparse. A sorting through, a dismissal, disposal, disposition to. Who can tell?

Two languages into one

Translation is gesture. In her words I am outside of my own. The body begins bilingual. Two inside of two and the delinquency of it all. The I within Thou, the duality of being, living, breathing: in and out. What about through? Écrire whereas writing. A sort of servitude. There is the desire for dialogue. A philanthropy, a yearning, a declaration. There is the suggestion of something finite, of a talking to self, through Je. Let me demystify: there is no two-pronged, no forking, no inside-out. There is inside within and one mangles other and they are two incompleting. But so many more. There is no and no or but multiplicity, contrivance, disdain. Taking and what's more. A malignancy. There is erasure and it is that formidable.

from HELSINKI

Peter Richards

I came upon this handsome older man
his head was crawling with loam and minotaur lice
he asked me to be his life-size effigy to apprehension
his back was dripping with three bickering lashes
and so full like an orange torn open
or a washboard for washing meat
his eyes looked inward blank disquieting slots
or steam-clotted drains where the hemispheres
do war and the hemispheres unite
your waters are too swirled and justifiable
for me to go with you right now
I need more time no I need some time first
days of pure hand holding and lots of chats
completely free of anabasis and long dinners
where I can serenely not drink from your back
maybe then we could be more than just friends
with lots of fun jaunts and SHUT THE FUCK UP
he said pulling my braid not so hard that it came
free of my head but hard enough that I was pulled
face down into his lap not like the lap of a choir
or the officer's lap or Julia's lap or even that lap on a track
when the racing is through it's true there were times
in life when I threw some races the money was good
but I hardly see how that fits with this I mean
isn't there another less severe SHUT THE FUCK UP
this time he hissed and this time the braid
came free of my head and without looking
back I looked back to see the old man

twining my braid in his four-hundred fingers
 PALSEY I shouted PUNSTER he yelled
and with that we both had a good laugh
 and you should have been with us that day
when we all went sledding together
 down a great monster of sunlight and hair.

ZARATHUSTRA PAINTS TOWN

Mike Dockins

*When you look long into an abyss,
the abyss also looks into you.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Zarathustra spake thus: "I've seen the abyss: a parabola yanking me into the depths of dormroom meth & taxicab X, sinister spirals gathering in my spinal fluid. Some narc wails prison folk songs about monsters under the bed. *Valium?* No thanks, Mister. As it is, my dreams are dire undercurrents of my minor chemical dependence motif. True that! It's hypnotic & lovely watching these wriggling sorority vixens grind their hips like my homeboy Noah rounding up salamanders & wasps & creeping nuclei, quarks spilling across the ark's deck. Whatever, the DJ pumps thump-thump junk all night. All the guys in black ogle me. Admit it, I'm on fire in these tight jeans. *Hey Pal, nothing doing, OK? Your lame shots keep smacking the rim.* Meantime, the sodium bulbs pulse like mad, & the neon lamps flash to the bass-boom of the trip-hop-fusion-techno. Kamikaze shots & Sex on the Beach go *glup glup glup*. Jackass DJ doesn't know his kneecap from a sensible EQ. I'm ready to bounce, to get my game on—a swollen star halfway to supernova. The whole solar system trembles. God's the abyss: a single, colossal, blue iris that doesn't flinch, only swirls. It's pretty—not what bibles make you expect. I'm getting on my cellie to Mecca, Kabul, Tel Aviv,

Damascus, & Babylon, gearing up for the geologically slow climb up that infernal tower. At the top, more spandex babes, a dime a dozen. Though it's been a vogue par-tay, after this we've got some plans to twist it up over in Oz."

AEROLITES

Carlos Edmundo de Ory

At the dawn of time, the mouths of men produced things other than words.

The state of grace in which zoo animals live, their practical philosophy.

Words are nothing more than noises, and the noise a door makes when knocked is likewise a word.

In the human world, all things seem human.

One should not photograph a baby without its prior permission.

I'm always dreaming of hyenas.

I asked a three year-old, "What are men?" and he answered, "Badness."
"And women?" and he answered, "A hat."

Like a cork in a bottle—that's how tight the dead are in their tombs.

All stones speak of love.

A spider drunk on whiskey.

A tattooed silence.

Listening to lunatics singing during my infancy made the strange familiar to me.

All of my metaphors can be drawn like Chinese characters.

Man, an animal that makes mistakes.

The fantastic monotony of the forests.

There are no books in the sea.

Just saying "I" makes me die of laughter.

The opposite of an angel is a siren.

God has blond hair.

I think therefore cows.

Translated from the Spanish by Steven J. Stewart

HAIKU

Elizabeth Marie Young

The conceits of barren trees no longer seduce my inner lady. I am the toy of my confident step, half sheltered, spirited, marching. My ego's slouch deflects the spells of matriarchs and fiends. I float dreamboats out to the lazy world—cannibals, infants, grizzlies. Whirl back to the alpine garden where companion stars synchronize swim. The gong triumphs. I leap after it. The earth moves through my moccasins. Then flash, alone, in a flaming ring, outstaring the horizon and daring, only then, to kiss the ground beneath.

DON'T TRY SO HARD

Daniel Nester

I've been this cramped before. No one actually tiptoes where they stare at people who tiptoe. Where Great Adventure is practically day care. The vinyl cartops the chimps attacked were our fathers' vinyl cartops. Let's fight those chimps together.

And when I cry, when I say stop, don't stop. You know what's best. Your hold on me is for life, no matter how much I straighten my vowels out. I will find my fifth exit someday, I will stop crying about you, and you will just keep on kicking my ass.

When you speak of me, speak of me sitting here under this tree.

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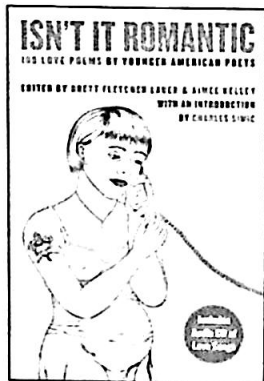
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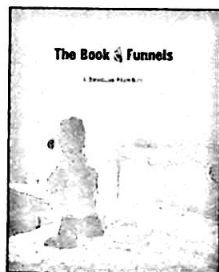
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